SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES CLASSICS

A New Collection of S-F from the Great Years

75¢ in CANADA U.K. "25P" SEPTEMBER 1973
ICD 08702 60¢

MARTIAN SPACESHIPS INVADE NEW YORK

THE ATOM SMASHER
by GORDON A. GILES

THE LOST COLONY
by JAMES NORMAN

DICTOGRAPHS OF DEATH
by P. F. COSTELLO

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN OF SPACE by FREDERIC KUMMER, Jr.

THE LOST RACE COMES BACK
by DON WILCOX

RAYHOUSE IN SPACE
by DUNCAN FARNSWORTH

BRIGADE OF THE DAMNED
by ED EARL REPP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE! Exclusive Astrological LP Record with:

A HOROSCOPE AS INDIVIDUAL AS YOUR OWN PERSONALITY... AS ACCURATE, TOO

- INDIVIDUALLY PREPARED COMPLETE CHARACTER ANALYSIS
- OVER 40 BIG PAGES. . .OVER 18,000 WORDS
- FULL YEAR OF PROJECTIONS INCLUDING IMPORTANT DAYS. . .TRENDS. . .EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- ONE-YEAR, MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

IN FACT, FUTURESCOPE IS SO ASTONISHINGLY ACCURATE, WE GUARANTEE EVERY STATEMENT IN WRITING, OR YOUR MONEY BACK!

How can we. . . ? One look at your own FUTURESCOPE will show you, convince you of the accuracy of every FUTURESCOPE statement.

Thanks to today's sophisticated computer technology, our astrologers can use millions of pieces of astrological information to give you the most personalized, in-depth look at yourself ever attempted. Your FUTURESCOPE will reveal your strengths and weaknesses. . . your emotional make up. . . opportunities for advancement in business, social life, love. . . the real you that's waiting to be discovered.

Designed by one of the foremost astrological authorities working today, FUTURESCOPE took years to develop. But it was well worth the wait. . . as one look will show. You'll be amazed at the telescopic accuracy FUTURESCOPE presents: pinpointing days of significance to you. And every FUTURESCOPE is a full-length personality study: more than 40 pages; more than 18,000 words; more information and insight than any other computerized horoscope. Based on the exact month, day, year, time and place of your birth, FUTURESCOPE is as unique as you are. Every FUTURESCOPE contains:

A full Natal Chart outlining the position of the Sun, the Moon, and all the planets at the time of your birth.

A personality profile that analyses and interprets your character, giving you a better understanding of yourself, your motivations, and your relations with others.

A complete, twelve-month forecast that highlights important days. . . periods of opportunity. . . general trends. . . the ups, downs, fluctuations of the year ahead.

Try looking at your FUTURESCOPE. You've nothing to lose, and a world of information to gain. And should you be dissatisfied for any reason, simply return your FUTURESCOPE for a full, unquestioned refund. Fill in and mail the coupon today. . . it will bring you a fabulous, accurate FUTURESCOPE, with no risk at all!

FREE BONUS EXCLUSIVE ASTROLOGY LP RECORD by HANS HOLZER
Side 1: How Astrology Really Works
Side 2: Astrology, Love & You
$6.98 Retail Value - YOURS FREE

S-UF7

FUTURESCOPE, 227 East 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10017
Please prepare my confidential in-depth personal horoscope as described above. *If not delighted I may return for full refund. (12 month limit).*

☐ *Enclosed is $20.00 plus .60 for postage & handling.*
☐ *SAVE - Order two FUTURESCOPE reports for $36.00 We pay postage and handling.*

☐ Mr.
☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Month _____ City _____

Date _____ State _____

Year _____ Country _____

Time of Birth _____ A.M. _____ P.M.
If exact time isn't known we'll use 12:00 noon.

COPYRIGHT 1972

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MOST EXCITING S-F STORIES OF ALL TIME

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES

SEPTEMBER 1973

4 MARTIAN SPACESHIPS INVADE NEW YORK
by HENRY GADE

6 THE LOST RACE COMES BACK
by DON WILCOX

26 RAYHOUSE IN SPACE
by DUNCAN FARNSWORTH

42 BRIGADE OF THE DAMNED
by ED EARL REPP

58 THE ATOM SMASHER
by GORDON A. GILES

92 THE LOST COLONY
by JAMES NORMAN

102 THE FLYING DUTCHMAN OF SPACE
by FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER, Jr.

114 DICTOGRAPHS OF DEATH
by P. F. COSTELLO

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES CLASSICS is published bi-monthly by Ultimate Publishing Co., Box 7, Oakland Gardens, Flushing N.Y. 11364 at 60¢ a copy. Subscription rates: One year (6 issues) U.S. and possession: $3.00; Canada and Pan American Union Countries: $3.50; all other countries: $4.00

Copyright 1973 by Ultimate Publishing Co., Copyrighted 1938, 1939, 1941 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Co. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW YORK INVADED

By Henry Gade

Here is the story of a future war; a war between Mars and Earth. Artist Paul has shown a possible weapon on the cover

MODERN aviation, and the great success of aerial blitzkrieg warfare, has shown us that in the future, the rocket ship, and the space ship, will play a very important part in the wars of the future. We all hope that there will be no such wars, but judging from past experience, it seems as inevitable as the present war.

Let us try to imagine what a raid from space, say from Mars, would be like. First, let us picture the New York of the year 2000. It is a vast city, with tremendous skyscrapers, and it is Earth's largest city. It is logical to assume that a smashing blow against such a gigantic metropolis as the city of that era will be, would play a great part in determining the outcome of such a future war.

So, let us say that at high noon, we are flying over New York in our sport model racing plane. We have no thought of war in our mind, and all seems peaceful below.

But suddenly, above us, we hear a growing roar, and down from space dart three huge space ships. Space ships are not unusual, because in this world of the year 2000, space travel is an accomplished fact, and space liners ply the void just as airliners cross the oceans today. Therefore, we aren't surprised.

But we are puzzled when the three ships take up position above the city, rather than landing at the space port. They form a ring, and begin to speed about in a huge circle

From each ship a tiny beam breaks out, to meet in the middle. We see that some change is taking place in the atmosphere. By some electrical magic, a gigantic whirlpool, in disc-shape, is being formed out of the air. This disc is heated by electrical discharges, and to our amazement it grows until it becomes, in effect, a giant atmospheric lens, just as capable of concentrating the sunlight as a lens of glass would be.

As the atmospheric lens suddenly begins to send its ray of fiery sunlight down in concentrated fury, we realize the truth. New York is being raided by the Martians. And they are using the most horrible weapon ever devised.

Whole blocks of New York burst into flame, turn black as charcoal under the terrific heat. The city rapidly becomes overhung with a pall of smoke, and we realize that immense destruction is going on. This is terrible. New York is helpless beneath such a weapon.

Now, up from the city's airports come the battle planes of our air force. But they are flying against the most powerful creations of the aviation industry. They are flying against atomic powered space ships.

Like deadly lances, the electrical rays leap out, catching our fighting planes, and explode their gasoline tanks. Down they go, flaming funeral pyres for the men in them.

What can we do?

But, as we hover in helpless horror, our own space-fighting craft arrive, speedy ships armed with powerful atomic cannons. But strangely, they do not attack the heavier armed battleships of space, with their deadly rays. Instead, as we wonder what is happening, they dart higher, up above the deadly lens, and from their bellies they loose a cloud of smoke. Back and forth they weave, forming a cloud blanket that cuts off the source of the great atmospheric lens' potency, the ordinary noon-day sunlight.

Here we have the Martians at a disadvantage. Due to their circular formation, and the necessity of maintaining it, they cannot move swiftly in a horizontal direction. They have one recourse, and that is to break formation, and dart away.

But now, like deadly hawks, the Earth ships dart down through the smoke screen, dive-bombing as no modern bomber could, and firing streams of atomic shells.

Down go the Martian ships, blasted to bits. But the war has begun. Mars has lost three battleships. Earth has had its greatest city devastated. Where will it all end? War grows constantly more horrible. What will the next attack be? Only the future, and the science of aviation can tell.

(For the purposes of illustration, artist Paul has shown the sunlight beam on the Front cover above as well as below the atmospheric lens. Actually, there would be no beam visible above it, and it would not be visible directly below the lens, but would become brighter as it concentrated, until at the ground, it would be hot enough to melt steel instantly.—Ed.)

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

YOU MAY HAVE LIVED ON EARTH BEFORE!

New places, or people you pass in the street, may seem oddly familiar to you. Have you known them in a previous life?

You wonder why you are living on earth to-day and for what purpose you are here. Certain secrets of life and mental development cannot be divulged indiscriminately. If you sincerely feel the need for instruction in the use of your higher creative endowment, you have reached the stage where the Rosicrucian teachings will be of practical value to you in your everyday life. Learn how to quietly impress your personality on others, to better your business and social position.

Use your own naturally endowed powers to achieve results you now think unattainable in your present state of untrained and undirected endeavour. Simple Rosicrucian teachings enable intelligent men and women to soar to new heights of achievement, new freedom, new contentment in life.

Devoted to the attainment of the true Brotherhood of Mankind, The Rosicrucians are a Non-Religious, Non-Political, Non-Profit Making Fraternity.

You are invited, though not urged, to write for the free 32 page book—"The Mastery of Life," which has been written to give readers an outline of the world-wide scope and history of this non-commercial fraternity.

This invitation is not to be taken as an assurance that every applicant receiving "The Mastery of Life" will be approved for membership by the Dean of Students.

Please use the coupon below or write to:

SCRIBE: E.C.I.

The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)

SAN JOSE CALIFORNIA 95114, U.S.A.

Scribe: E.C.I.
THE ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
San Jose, California 95114, U.S.A.

Please send me, without cost, the book "THE MASTERY OF LIFE."

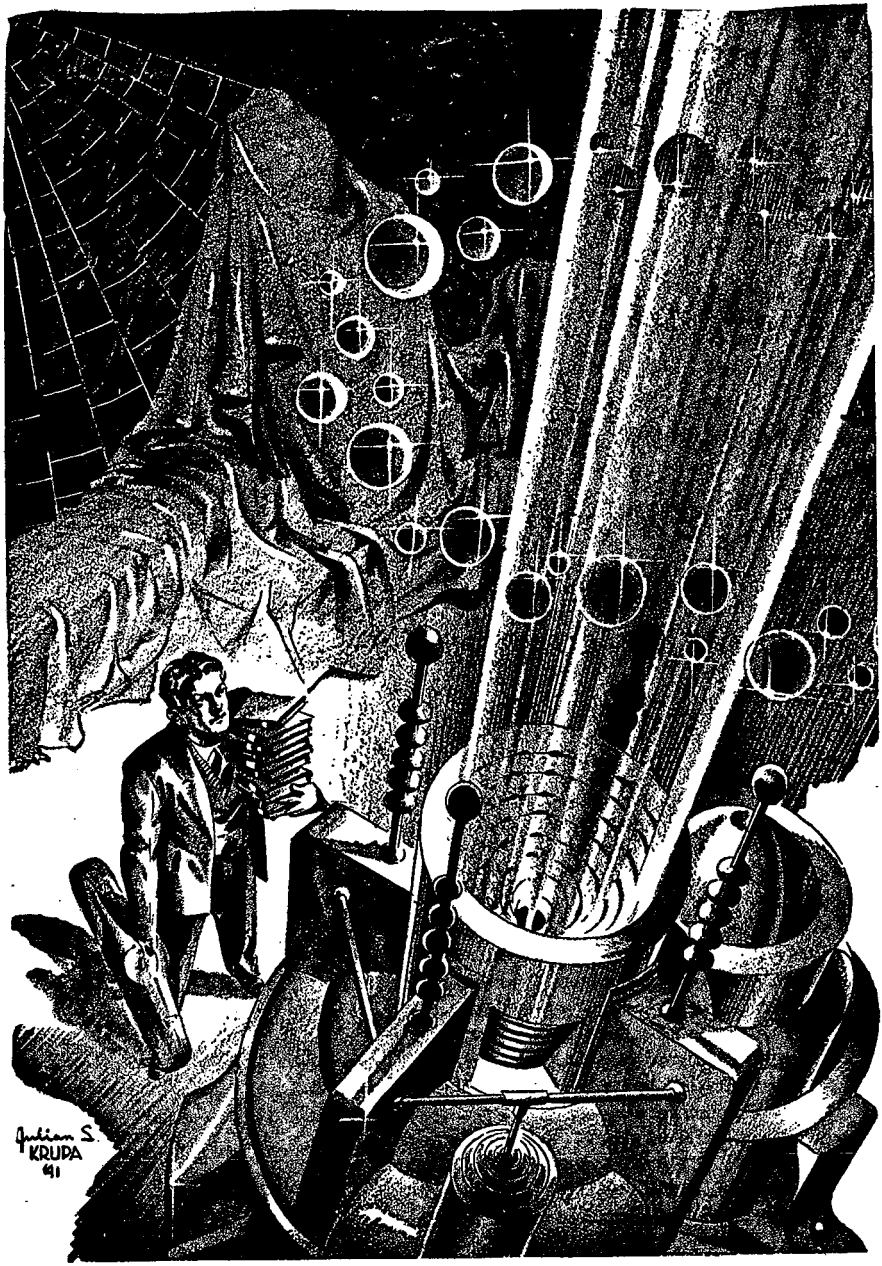
Name.....

Address.....

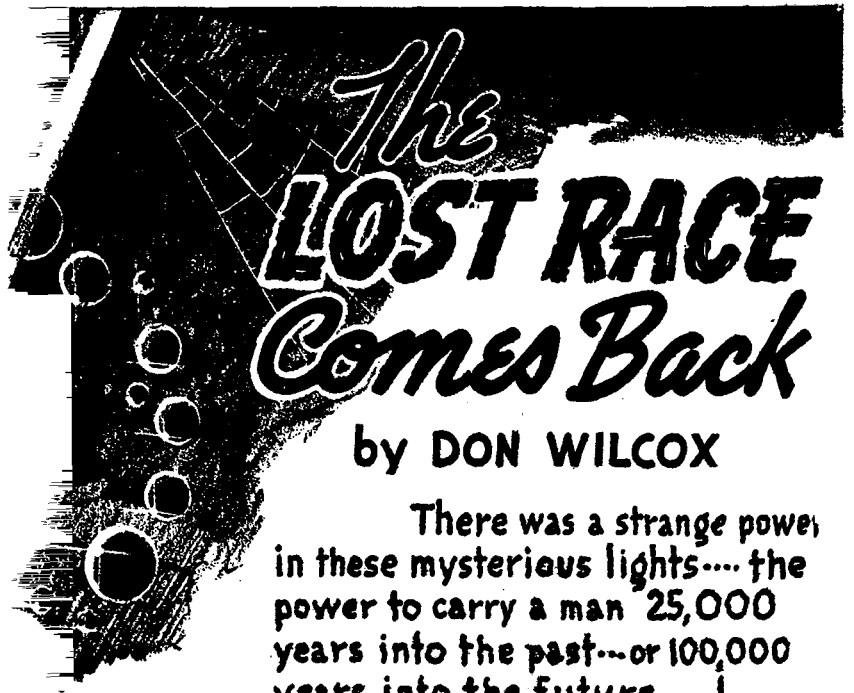
State.....

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR ZIP CODE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The LOST RACE Comes Back

by DON WILCOX

There was a strange power in these mysterious lights.... the power to carry a man 25,000 years into the past—or 100,000 years into the future....!

VINCENT HARRISON grumbled at himself with every step. "I'm a sap," he thought, scowling at himself in a passing display window. "My spring vacation's practically gone, and what have I done with my time? Nothing. Nothing but run errands for other people. I'm a sap."

He recounted his injuries as he trudged along. That was the way with vacations. You look forward to them for weeks, and when they come you don't get a thing done. Everyone horns in on your time. Everyone from your grandpa down to your neighbor's yowling tomcat.

You run errands for your Aunt Minnie. You look up old acquaintances for your college professors. You lug your saxophone into a repair shop because your orchestra leader has got to have a saxophone player in his spring concert and you're the only one that can cut the three-measure cadenza he wrote into his new original composition, The Symphony of Time.

"I'm too accommodating, that's my trouble. I'm everybody's wheelhorse and everybody's errand boy and—look at me, loaded down with a saxophone case and an armload of Aunt Minnie's books," he temporarily overlooked the fact that some of the volumes were his own biology reference books that he had taken out of the library on Aunt Minnie's card, and that the saxophone was very much his own. "Tomorrow this vacation's over and I've only had three dates with Lucille and one with Marge, and I haven't worked in more than five hours of bowling—and hell, I haven't even started practicing that symphony."

He snorted at the thought. Symphony of Time! Original composition by Maestro Stenovo O. Galancho in four movements. With a long, slow andante movement. That was a laugh. Time doesn't move that way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There's nothing slow about it. Ask any college student on his spring vacation.

Vincent stopped at an intersection and consulted a notebook. He checked over the items. 1. Get the saxophone repaired. (Yes, he'd done that.) 2. Return library books. (He was on his way, the long way around.) 3. Call Marge for date. (He hadn't forgotten that.) 4. Look up Xandibaum, 23rd and Oak. (All right, everything was done—or would be, before he got back home.)

The address of Xandibaum took him several blocks out of his way. So far as he could remember, he had never traversed this street before. The house was much like all the others of the block—an old frame structure with a mansion-like elegance in spite of being crowded in too closely among its neighbors. An iron fence surrounded it, but the gate was open. Vincent started in.

HE was met by the custodian of the place, who came out the front door donning his hat and gloves.

"Xandibaum?" the custodian shrugged. "He ain't here."

"Will he be back this afternoon?"

"Couldn't say. He never says when he's comin' back."

Vincent weighed his baggage and grunted, "Long walk over here for nothing." He started to go reluctantly and the dismal-faced old custodian followed him out to the walk. Vincent said, "So you don't have any idea when he'll be in? Did he leave the city?"

"I couldn't say. The day I came to work here he gave me to understand that how or where he came or went was none of my business. So long."

"One more question," said Vincent as the fellow got into his parked car. "Just when, to your best knowledge, did Mr. Xandibaum leave? This morning, or this noon—or was it yesterday?"

"It was four years ago this Easter." The custodian drove off.

"Smart guy," Vincent muttered as the car rolled away. "Well, at least I can go back and tell my physics prof that I saw his friend Xandibaum's house."

Vincent's gaze at the structure led his steps forward toward the front porch. He noted the name "R. O. XANDIBAUM" set in one of the concrete steps. He noted the narrow stone walk that led around to the rear and was half tempted to follow it. Something that his physics professor had said about this man Xandibaum tickled his curiosity. He sauntered idly around the house, recalling that conversation.

A far-away look had come into the physics prof's eyes upon learning that Vincent lived in this city.

"I don't suppose you know a man named Xandibaum—a scientist—no, you wouldn't, of course. He doesn't mix with the public much. I wonder what he's doing. . . ."

The physics prof's voice had droned away in a reverie of memory, and Vincent had broken in with, "You wouldn't want me to look him up, would you?"

"Yes—yes, I would—very much I would, if you don't mind." And then the physics prof had dropped a few hints as to Xandibaum's curious career. The eccentric old thinker, he said, had always attended the scientists' conclaves year after year, and always had tried to make a stump speech about some of his revolutionary theories about a universal something that he called a *time chain* that transcends the present—that is, it links through the past, the present, and the future. . . ." Again the physics prof's voice had mumbled away into something incomprehensible.

"It sounds daffy," Vincent had commented.

"That was what all the scientists thought. Old Xandibaum used to try to insist that this *time chain* could be tapped in a thousand ways for scientific experiments. But the science conventions would laugh him off the platform. And the fifteenth year that he tried to put over his speech, they threw him out bodily. I've never heard of him since."

"Gone hermit, maybe."

"No doubt. But if he's still living in your city, and you can get word to him, tell him that I, for one, am still pondering over some of his radical theories." With that the physics professor had wished Vincent a good vacation, and Vincent had gone off musing over the strange ideas.

Now he looked up to find himself at the rear door of the old house. A neighbor's dog came barking down to the fence, and a genial, portly man, working in the neighboring yard, struck up a conversation with Vincent.

"I had hoped to find Mr. Xandibaum, the scientist," said Vincent, and in a minute he had gone over the story of the errand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for his physics professor, the meeting of a moment ago with the custodian, the custodian's blunt answer that Xandibaum had been away for four years.

The neighbor puffed at his pipe.

"He was right about that, my lad. Xandibaum hasn't been seen for four years. He's dead, of course. But that custodian's too thick-headed to realize it. Says he's just gone on some mysterious journey and he'll be back someday. Wanna go in and take a look at the scientist's stuff?"

"Huh?"

"Sure, go ahead. You can't hurt anything. The basement door's right there on the back porch."

Vincent hesitated. "You're sure it's all right?"

"Sure. I go down every day or so to borrow tools—usually my own that the care-taker has forgot to bring back. . . ."

Vincent started to set his saxophone case down on the back porch, but fearing he might forget it, he lugged it along down the basement stairs in his left hand, with his books under his left arm.

THE passage beyond the tool room was coated with dust and draped with spider webs. He blew the dust off the scratch pad that hung on the door knob. It read:

"William: I'll be out for a short time. Please see that nothing is disturbed."

Vincent opened the door and went in.

He didn't turn on the light. There was already a glow of lights from a distant corner of the big room—a circular string of what he took to be miniature light bulbs. At a glance, they gave him the impression of an illuminated string of pearls floating horizontally in the blackness.

For a moment he was slightly disturbed to think that the careless custodian had left these lights burning. At once the objects in the room engrossed his attention, however, and he was completely absorbed. He spent several minutes trudging slowly through the aisles.

Each table of apparatus seemed more formidable than the one before, painting higher and more grotesque shadows on the wall.

Suddenly it occurred to Vincent that the shadows were gradually rising all over the room. That is to say, the string of illuminated pearls from the farther corner of the room had been gradually descending all the while.

A chill ran over Vincent's shoulders and down his arms. He clutched his luggage and made his way through the shadows over to the corner from which the light was rising.

His nerves quickened. The circle of little lights was almost to the floor. What would happen if they touched? Would they crash out? He glanced back to catch the general direction of the door, in case he should be left in darkness.

Down—down—the lights floated toward the floor, and for an instant they must have touched. At least they suddenly reversed the direction of their movement. Now they were rising.

With his free hand Vincent mopped his brow. They were rising as gently as they had fallen, the whole formation, as horizontal as the floor itself. All in all, it was too much like a magician's trick for comfort. Vincent bent closer.

So far as he could see, those lights were not suspended from any visible wire. Were they controlled by the strange apparatus built around and beneath them? He glanced upward, searched the space overhead for a trace of puppet strings. What he saw was a patch of open sky high above him—for directly above the chain of lights was an open air shaft that rose vertically through the house.

Had these little balls of light floated down through that shaft? Were they going to make a return trip and escape through it? Vincent gulped.

In appearance the little blobs of light were illuminated marbles, as big around as the end of your little finger. Their glow was dull and slightly colored. They gave forth no sound or smell or feeling of heat. They stood—or better, swam—in the same definite arrangement, a few inches apart, constantly in a single horizontal plane—a plane that was slowly rising.

Now they floated above the level of the books hooked close within his left elbow. His eye traveled from one side of the circle to the other. The lights were very mysterious indeed, for they were indeterminate. They faded away into the blackness like the tails of comets, giving him the impression that their influence might extend a great deal farther than he could see.

"Damnedest thing I ever saw," he muttered half aloud.

He stood so close now that he could have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

passed his hand over a score or more of the lights with a single stroke.

He thought of doing so. He made several tests to convince himself that they were giving out no noticeable heat, that they were not strung together by wires, nor supported from above or below. He passed his hand between two of them. Nothing!

The physics professor's words echoed through his confused thoughts: "A universal power—a *time chain*—a power that can be tapped in a thousand ways for scientific experiments. . . ."

Vincent barely touched the ball of light nearest him.

INSTANTLY there was a brightness like daylight all about him. The sudden change frightened him so that his hand jerked back through the light blob. The blinding light vanished.

Vincent stepped back, trembling. He hugged his sax case and his books, and took a deep breath, casting his dazzled eyes over the lowering shadows of the laboratory instruments. Well, everything seemed to be safe and sound, and he had to admit to himself that he hadn't experienced any burn or electrical shock. And actually, there hadn't been a sound to frighten him. Nothing but the sudden brightness.

Okay, he thought; if this is simply a slick way of turning the laboratory lights on full blaze, he'd do it again.

Which one of these numerous lighted marbles had he passed his hand through? He was proud to find that he knew the answer. Swift though it had all happened, he had made one definite observation. There was a clean-cut color division in this article of lights.

The light ball nearest him and all the others extending away to his left were of a bluish cast.

But the one he had touched, he was dead certain, had also gone blue at his touch—but as his hand had jerked back through it, it had returned to its original reddish tone.

Likewise, all the other little spheres of light on his right were reddish.

He touched the nearest red one again. Again it turned blue—barely visible in the blinding brightness that simultaneously swept in.

It was a brightness like all out-of-doors. In fact, if he could believe his dazzled eyes, *it was the out-of-doors!*

The glimpse of a completely changed scene shot panic through Vincent. The impression that the laboratory had suddenly been swept away, and the whole city with it, leaving him out in broad daylight in the open countryside—it was all so frightening and uncanny that his hand struck out in a frantic, uncontrolled gesture, *through ten or twelve of the little lights.*

It was a wild, impulsive swing of the arm that anyone might have made under the circumstances. But far from combating the unseen power, his action unleashed a thundering, roaring, splashing fury! *The rolling sea! It was tumbling in upon him!*

It was impossible, it was unbelievable, but it was there—inescapable. Storm-tossed waters were all about him. His feet were going down into water. He glimpsed a landless horizon.

The only thing before his eyes that had the remotest semblance of familiarity was that innocent-looking chain of blue and red lights—

He swung his hand back at them—barely reached them—flung his palm through the whole series that he had struck before. His stroke had the right effect. Solid earth bounded up against his feet, the blaze of the intense daylight was upon him, the ocean was gone!

Whatever this magic stage scenery was, it was far too real for comfort. Vincent knew he was as pale as those lights had been before he struck them back to red. He felt like collapsing. But noting the great outdoors that again surrounded him, he realized that he was still far from his original laboratory surroundings.

In other words, there were more blue lights to be touched back to red before he could walk out of this place through the same comfortable door by which he had entered.

"It's all done with mirrors;" he muttered cynically. And casting his eyes at the apparently distant horizon, he added. "Nobody could say that about *this* scene."

A BREATH-TAKING scene it was—from the rugged hills in the distance, to the wide sluggish river that flowed along with colored autumn leaves sifting down upon it, to the muddy ground at Vincent's feet. That mud had come from the bit of ocean he had just picked up in his shoes and trouser legs. He was soaked to the knees.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where am I?" he called out loud, trying to break out of his paralysis of astonishment. "How the hell did I knock out that ocean? . . . Oh, yes! The *lights!*"

The lights were still slowly floating upward. His eyes combed them sharply and focused on the one that might restore him to the laboratory. The laboratory where the machine that gave birth to this weird circle of time-changing lights.* He leaped and struck at it—and *missed.*

A wild terror seized him. He leaped again, and a third time. The things were rising out of range.

Again he glanced at the vista about him, the water at his feet, the sloping hillsides, the river, the distant sunlit horizon. Fake or real, this scene was something he had to dissolve quickly or not at all. He set down the saxophone case, leaped from it—and missed. The lights were getting away from him.

He set the case up on end, tried to climb up on it. He made two false starts, then succeeded in mounting. The string of lights was just out of reach. He leaped—and the saxophone case turned. He went down in a heap to the ground.

That ground was the real thing—a coarse sandy soil, the kind that clings to your socks and shoes when you walk along a riverside with wet feet.

Vincent sat down on the saxophone case, pulled his books up on his knees, and gazed heavenward. The warm sun boiled down on his face. A whiff of breeze sent a few red autumn leaves whirling past his feet. He did not see them.

He saw nothing except the circle of luminous marbles high overhead.

The little ring of light climbed up—up—up. Its faded lights grew fainter. At last it melted away against the background of a pearly cloud.

CHAPTER II

Twenty-Five Thousand Years Ago

"A TIME CHAIN," Vincent mumbled to himself. "An infinite, universal, timeless power. . . . Hmmm. . . . Xandibaum's been gone for four years, has he? Four years. . . ."

Vincent lay in the warm sand and squinted his eyes at the bright sky. Slowly he removed his wet shoes and socks, never taking his eyes off the soft white clouds overhead.

"Four years. . . . Xandibaum must have liked the climate. . . . Okay, he can have it. . . . Me, I'll take the next train back. I'll wait right here till that time chain comes back—whether it's ten minutes or ten hours."

Ten minutes later he added, "or ten days," although he contented himself that he would surely not have to wait that long.

If it hadn't been for that terrifying encounter with the open sea, and the chilling reminder in the form of cold, wet feet, he might have induced himself to believe that this was all a very pleasant dream. It *was* pleasant. No one who had been in the rush of winding up endless errands at the close of a brief spring vacation—not to mention filling college notebooks, and sandwiching in too many social engagements—could fail to appreciate an hour of this.

Or maybe two hours. Vincent glanced at the sun. The afternon was wearing away, and little breezes hinted that a cool autumn evening was coming.

Strange, this autumn weather. It was as if he had been transplanted into another world—a quiet, peaceful world of nature and beauty. And he had definitely gone into another day.

Whatever the day or the world, there were no signs of civilization anywhere about. No houses dotting the distant landscapes, nor highways, nor railways. Not even any fences.

He listened sharply, thinking he might hear a locomotive whistle somewhere in the distance, or an airplane droning across the sky. All he heard was the gentle swish of autumn leaves falling.

Then from the distant bend of the river he caught the dim echo of men's voices. He

* Obviously the machine invented by the mysterious Mr. Xandibaum is fixed in our own world of 1941, and the circle of time-defying lights which possess the power to energize any object touching them with the time-energy of the particular time-world to which it is attuned, exists not only in our world, but in other worlds, simultaneously. Perhaps it is the fluctuating of this ring of energy through the various phases of time which makes it rise and fall so mysteriously upon each time-world. Naturally, to our eyes, and senses, travel through other than three dimensions would be impossible to perceive. Thus, the up-and-down motion is the only indication we could have of the actual motion of the time lights through the unknown dimension of its true motion.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stacked his luggage on the ground and strolled down to the water's edge. From there he could see the group of fishermen, a mile or more distant, plying along the river in little black boats.

He trudged back to his original landing place and resumed his watch for the return of the time chain. Apparently his wait was going to be more than a matter of minutes. He hoped the fishermen wouldn't come along and question him, for he felt instinctively that the best explanation he could muster would be met with skepticism.

He glanced at his watch. Eight o'clock! So that was what time it was back home.

"Darn it, I've missed my dinner already. I ought to be on my way to my date. That sun fooled me." This new day he'd dropped into stood at four or five o'clock at the most. Again he felt a feverish urgency to get back. The first thing he'd do would be to get on a telephone and reel off some excuses.

What a hell of a mix-up. If he didn't get into the library yet this evening, Aunt Minnie would have to pay a fine of six or eight cents on her books, and she'd raise Cain about that. And how!

And that little blonde Pi Phi had been counting on this evening of all evenings—not so much on account of Vincent as because of that new swing band scheduled for the Silver Slipper.

Vincent paced about uneasily. What sort of story could he hatch up that would hold water? This was one clear case where telling the truth was out of the question. No one could be expected to understand without first knowing about Xandibaum. And no one knew Xandibaum. Even Xandibaum's own custodian had no conception of the real thing Xandibaum had done.

When in trouble, turn to a friend. Vincent strolled over to his saxophone case.

HE lifted the instrument out with the greatest of care, and unwrapped it from the wide blue velvet scarf that clothed it. Folding the scarf back into the case, he noticed the sheet of manuscript music in the lid—the Symphony of Time! Maestro Stenovo O. Galancho's masterpiece!

Of all times and places, thought Vincent, to get down to serious practice. He set the sheet of music against the pile of books, fastened it there with a couple of rocks, warmed up the saxophone reed and went to work.

Except for momentary lapses when he gazed hopefully into the heavens, he practiced faithfully for an hour. By that time he felt much better. That was one thing, at least, that he had accomplished during his spring vacation.

He became so engrossed in rambling through his memorized repertoire that he fairly forgot about his surroundings. While in the midst of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More," with variations, he was startled by a shadow that passed over him.

It was the elongated shadow of someone's head.

He turned his eyes slowly and saw on the sunward side of him a group of similar shadows that stretched across the ground in the forms of long slithery bodies. He stopped playing, and the long shadows jerked into a restless, nervous huddle. He looked up.

Within fifty feet of him they stood, a group of bare-armed, bare-legged people—thirty-five or forty of them. For the most part they were dressed, if at all, in the skins of animals.

At his gaze, the group shrank backward. In the absence of saxophone notes he could hear the hoarse whispers of the older persons and the frightened whimpers of the young.

Vincent snapped the cap on his saxophone mouthpiece and hugged the instrument against his chest as if it had something of the protective powers of a hunter's gun. Through his dizzy thoughts flashed a series of words: Savages! Or a Hollywood picture cast—or a nudist camp—or *cannibals!*

But before he could collect his thoughts, he was blurting a broadside at them in the stoutest voice he could muster.

"Well, what do you want? Any kick against a man tooting his saxophone? It's a free country, ain't it?"

The leather-clad natives were all eyes and mouths. They were definitely pleased with this speech and they began to mumble excitedly among themselves. They made unintelligible gestures at Vincent and began to edge closer.

He responded with another toot of the saxophone, and their voices and gestures gathered excitement. Obviously they approved of his brand of music.

"Any request numbers?" he barked at them. "Tell me how to get out of this place and I'll play for your grandmother's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

funeral."

THEY blinked at him, or jabbered, or puffed out their cheeks and wiggled their fingers as an encouragement to more music. Gradually they edged up to within fifteen or twenty feet of him, though the younger and more timid ones hung back. The whole gang of them were playing cautious, for that matter; for whenever Vincent would blast out with a shrill squawk they would jump back and some of the little fellows would take to their heels.

Vincent cut loose with "Pop Goes the Weasel," which proved to be good for unlimited repetitions. Never, he thought, had that selection had a more entranced audience. Each time he did a slap-tongue on the "pop" they caught a new surprise out of it.

But after two dozen times over, they came to expect the "pop" and instead of jumping back nervously, they would shout with glee. Whoever these people were, they knew how to laugh.

That was something, thought Vincent, breathing a little easier. He realized by this time that they must have been listening and watching more or less during his past hour of practice. And unlike the savages of the movies, they hadn't slipped up on him to knife him in the back.

Vincent had no thought of making friends. His sole motive was to bridge over the time that would elapse before the time chain returned, in the least disagreeable way possible. But all the while he was unconsciously taking down notes on these strange people.

They were a big race. The men—and now he observed that some of these were the fishermen he had seen earlier, for their boats were lying across the way on the bank—were huge, muscular, tan-skinned fellows who must have averaged six-feet-two. They stood straight. Their eyes were bright and intelligent, their heads were well shaped, their teeth showed strong and white when their thin lips parted.

The women and children, who had apparently come from some other direction, gradually attached themselves to their respective men-folks as the amazed audience shuffled about. The women, too, were strong and handsome, and some of the younger ones were beautiful.

"There," Vincent yelled at them after he had been playing steadily for several minutes. "That's all I know. Run along home. The show's over."

They came closer and motioned for more music. Vincent played on. He was still playing when darkness settled down upon the scene. Then it began to rain.

Most of the crowd dispersed. At last, thought Vincent, this request program was over. But he was mistaken. One of the men, whom Vincent hadn't noticed, sat where he was and demanded more music.

That is to say, he barked at Vincent in sharp, threatening tones whenever the music stopped. He also gestured with a small hand ax. That ax, made of a polished stone, was just white enough so that Vincent could follow its movement as the man slapped it back and forth against the big, crusty palm of his hand.

At last the white stone ceased to move and the whites of the man's eyes disappeared, and a flicker of lightning showed Vincent that his faithful listener had fallen asleep in the midst of the concert and the drizzling rain.

Vincent picked up his things and sought the shelter of a huge tree, where he spent the night watching the skies for a chain of lights that never came.

SOMETIME in the night he heard a jumble of native voices, the voices of young children. By the illuminations of the passing storm he saw them awaken the sleeping man and help him up the hillside and away. The man, he realized for the first time, had only one leg.

"And I was afraid to break away from him!" Vincent muttered to himself. Then he wondered whether he had been a sap or not. "He couldn't have run me down—but he might have thrown that ax. . . . Anyway before morning I'm gonna get out of here or my name's not Vincent Harrison!"

By morning his name wasn't Vincent Harrison. It was Pon-pon-pon.

By high noon he knew what his name was, and he knew that all of the sun-browned natives of these hillsides had heard of Pon-pon-pon. And when they flocked around him by the scores he wasn't in the least doubt about what was wanted. It was up to him to take a deep breath and blow some pon-pon-pons out of his saxophone.

They were wild for it. If he tried to put them off with silence, they took it like an affliction of pain. But if they got too close he scared them back with a nerve-shatter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing squeal.

By night they became sufficiently friendly to offer him food, which he gladly accepted. But their urgings to him to accompany them over the hillsides he definitely rejected. This was his camp spot.

For more than a week he stood by his guns. Every day his spirits sank lower. When, oh when, would that time chain return? The merrier the tunes that he played for his childlike audiences, the bluer and more despondent he became.

A cold wind swept in on the tenth day and he was miserable. He had tried to show these handsome primitives, by means of gestures, that he must stay on this spot and make his camp here. But the chilling wind, together with his fatigue and bewilderment, broke his will. When the big crippled man and his noisy children came down the hillside to tug at him and coax him with food, he went back with them.

They led him into a cave where a warm fire burned.

Beyond the fire an artist was at work, carving a picture on the wall. It was a picture of a buffalo. Vincent took one look, then in a flash he knew. These big brawny people were the Cro-Magnons, the finest, most highly developed race of the late Stone Age. They were, in fact, the first modern men; and Vincent recalled from his studies, with a thrill of pride, that no modern man ever excelled them in physique or brain capacity.

And here he was among them!

Then the full impact of his discovery struck down. He, Vincent Harrison, was somewhere on the face of Europe, twenty-five thousand years from home!

CHAPTER III

Vincent Goes Cro-Magnon

AS long as Pon-pon-pon played his saxophone he was something of a god to the Cro-Magnons. He was a creature to be reverenced. He was the maker of magic, his own peculiar brand of sound-magic, therefore he deserved the best of food and a place by the fire.

Fangler, the one-legged man, was a fierce old patriarch who was complete master of his cave and family. His word was law, and he was both feared and respected. His permission was necessary for every action, for every new venture, for every change. By his order, and under his control and guidance, new caves were built, food was stored for the winter, weapons were fashioned; and without his dictum no member of the family left the cave to take up new domain, married, or even planned to be married. He selected proper mating partners, blessed their union by his approval. Even babies were named by him. He was complete lord of all he surveyed, and master of his flock.

Thus it was Fangler who ordered a place made in his cave for the handsome, strangely dressed, young newcomer.

But when, after several weeks, Vincent began to put to use wisps of the Cro-Magnon language, he started to lose prestige. His jargon was so jumbled and his pronunciation so faulty that his efforts to talk were shocking to all who heard him.

Still, as time went on Vincent's speech was rapidly improving. But what was far more important in the eyes of Fangler's family, this newcomer possessed new and wonderful ideas—an endless supply of them. He was continually making some improvement in the Fangler's household equipment. The word spread over the valley that Pon-pon-pon—or *Ponpo*, as they soon abbreviated it—was a genius at inventions.

Ponpo made improvements in their carts by enlarging the wheels. Instead of using the roughly hewn slices of fallen logs for wheels, he warped tough slabs of wood into circles and fixed them with spokes.

By using spindles and weights strung up with cords, he managed to keep the roast turning slowly and evenly over the fire.

But the achievement that contributed most to the already legendary reputation of Ponpo was his invention of a wooden leg for Fangler.

That wooden leg was a marvel that made conversation far and wide. Ponpo himself showed a smile of pride to the Cro-Magnon visitors who came from miles around to verify the story that Fangler could now walk about on the stump of a tree.

"My home shall always be your home," Fangler had declared, heaping down praise upon Ponpo in extravagant Cro-Magnon words.

"I hope not," Ponpo had muttered to himself in English.

He could have gone, if he had cared to take his chances with an unknown world,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but here he would have the benefit of the guidance of those experienced in a primitive world—and who knew what dangers there were about which he knew nothing?

Besides, he wanted to go back to 1941. By staying here, he could remain close to the spot where the time chain would return—when the weather abated enough to resume his vigil. He'd tried several times, watching, and almost freezing to death. But no sign of the time chain had he seen. No telling when it would return, or if it would ever return. How far up did it go before it reversed its direction and came down again? Would it take months, years? Or had it returned several times already, while he was in Fangler's cave.

Right now he was stuck here, in this ancient world. But, he resolved, he'd get back someday. When spring came again, he'd camp right on the spot where the time chain had deposited him, and he'd wait till it returned!

But for the present this cave was his only home; despondent as he was, he realized that there was nothing to do but make the best of it.

It *was* an interesting home, as far as that went. Any home ruled by a patriarch who could change his moods from kindness to fierceness as quickly as Fangler, was bound to be interesting. But it was far from agreeable.

And Vincent had not been there many months before he realized that even to Hunzk, who was Fangler's oldest son, and therefore most important of Fangler's problems against the day when he should be granted full manhood and given a mate to become mistress of a new cave-hold in the family of Fangler, the home was by no means an agreeable place.

The cave was too crowded. The fire was not big enough. The heap of firewood, which Ponpo helped Hunzk replenish daily, took up too much room. So did the bins of grain, and the carcasses of game, and the hides, and the stone tables where Hunzk and Fangler chipped their arrowheads, and the artist's pile of equipment in the center of the floor.

Everything had moved indoors for the coming of winter; and taken altogether it was a caveful. In addition to all the goods and supplies and smoke and smells, there were nine people in the cave most of the time: Fangler; his wife; three young children; Penzi; Hunzk; Torlink, who was an artist and not a member of the family by blood; and Vincent himself.

If the freezing winds rested for a few days, the congestion would be relieved for a short time; Hunzk would go off on a short hunting trip, or Ponpo would go out to watch for the return of his time chain, or Penzi would venture across the hills to visit with one of her neighboring girlfriends. And certainly those three scalawags of boys who dressed in fox furs and who got into mischief at every opportunity would not fail to get out for a romp whenever the weather permitted.

On the other hand, a week of winter warmth also increased the congestion of the cave by bringing sundry visitors from the outside, and often these would stay all night; or if a blizzard swept in, they would stay for days. And *their* families would sit by their own fires calmly waiting for better weather to learn who had been under shelter and who had been frozen to death in the snow.

HUNZK and Penzi, adopted daughter of Fangler, had been friendly with Vincent from the first. Hunzk was nearly full grown, and he was already an expert hunter and a ready fighter. He was eager to escape his father's domination, and marry, and establish a cave-hold of his own. But as yet his father, an instructor in tribal customs and knowledge and an important authority among the people of the valley, had refused to confer the full rites of manhood upon him.

Penzi, Hunzk's adopted sister, was a thorn in Vincent's flesh. A cheerful, good-natured thorn, to be sure—as full of giggles as any homely, skinny thirteen-year-old girl he ever knew back in grade school. Penzi doted on everything that belonged to Ponpo: his dainty manner of eating, comparatively speaking; his preference for clean hands and a clean face; his curious clothing; above all, the mysterious books that he kept hidden away in his saxophone case.

All of which nettled Vincent Harrison.

It disgusted him to see how that little snip of a Penzi would put on airs in the presence of her friends—all because she lived in the same cave with the most wonderful of all human oddities—Pon-pon-pon.

But the real trouble began when old Fangler himself began to notice the attention that Penzi was paying to Ponpo.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fangler was angered. This was not right. Nothing should be done unless with his permission—and certainly Penzi had not asked Fangler whether she could speak to Vincent or to become interested in him.

For a time Vincent didn't know what was wrong. He only knew that something was causing the old stump-legged patriarch to grumble more and to lose his temper more often than previously.

"It's this damned being-indoors all the time," Vincent told himself. "As soon as spring comes I'll get out of here." He took refuge, as usual, in a hazy dream of planing a house down there by the river where he could keep watch for the time chain, day and night.

A sharp bark from Fangler brought his thoughts back with a jerk. He caught the command, and wasted no time obeying. It was an order to go out and get some water —which, at this season, consisted to bring back a big ball of snow to be melted in a stone vessel.

He returned to find Fangler and his wife arguing violently. Their words were outside Vincent's comprehension. Their tempers were not. Fangler's wife, the buxom black-haired Kansleen, had a tongue that could lash like a whip when the occasion demanded.

But her voice went silent the instant she realized that Vincent had returned. All of which set Vincent's curiosity to working. Was he somehow involved in this family squabble?

Later that night while the three children and Hunzk and Penzi were still munching by the fire at the other end of the cave, Vincent, supposedly asleep on his shelf, overheard a few more grumbled words between Fangler and Kansleen.

"But for me," Fangler growled in an undertone, "she'd have died in the snow."

"You lie with a smooth tongue, Fangler," his wife retorted. "You stole her."

"She owes her life to me."

"So you want to eat her up like a wild boar."

"I only want her not to forget."

"How *could* she?" Kansleen snarled under her breath.

"I have made myself her father and her first friend. By me, she lives. Without her we would have no daughter."

Kansleen's face softened and her voice grew tender. "She is our daughter, Fangler. She has taken the place of our own daughter, who died. You will always be her father, Fangler."

Fangler gave a muffled grunt. He was somewhat soothed but not entirely satisfied.

Then Kansleen added, "Remember she is yet a child. Her affections are wild like the winds. . . But I will speak to her."

VINCENT caught enough of this conversation to guess which way the wind was blowing. He was head over heels in troubles that were none of his business.

"Here it is in a nutshell," he said to himself, after a week of sharp watching and listening. "I come bumping into a crowded family, and Penzi takes a fancy to me. I try to keep out of her sight and she tags around after me. I don't like it for my own sake. And much less for her father's sake. And her mother's all stirred up because her father's got an idea he's been disobeyed. And now he takes it out on me and Penzi both. But I got twentieth century worries that are more important."

Vincent scrunched down in bed of bearskin on straw and watched the flicker of the fire against the cave ceiling. "Twentieth centuries worries. . ." He chuckled to himself as he thought over the trifling matters that had disturbed some of the people he knew. His own mysterious disappearance, as he had often stopped to consider, must have been a shocking thing to his parents and a few friends. But whenever he thought of Aunt Minnie—or of Maestro Steveno O. Galancho, his music teacher. . . .

Well, he couldn't help reflecting that the thing Aunt Minnie must be most worried about was the library fines that were piling up on her missing books. And as for the maestro, could there be anything more tragic than the loss of part of his symphony manuscript?

Man's worries, Vincent concluded sleepily, may have undergone *some* evolution in the course of twenty-five thousand years.

CHAPTER IV

The Time Chain Returns

BEFORE Kansleen had a chance to talk with her impetuous thirteen-year-old, the family friction ignited into a physical fight. It lasted for only two or three blows —brief but effective.

It began when Vincent, coming into the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

darkness from the bright sunlight, accidentally stumbled into Fangler. Without warning the old man unleashed his power of authority in a staggering swat across Vincent's cheek.

The sound of that blow was followed instantly by another as Hunzk lashed out with his fist. Fangler's open hand smashed against the rock wall. Fangler roared and crouched as if to tear into a whole-hearted fight. His tall, well-muscled son stood straight before him, arms folded, and the old man's roar tapered away.

The bond between Hunzk and Vincent grew tighter in that moment. Vincent, a guest in this cave, would have had no right to fight. Hunzk had taken rights in his own hands—by fighting his father—with the result that a few days later his father conferred upon him the full honors of manhood.

Late in the night, while all the others were sleeping, Kansleen and Penzi talked the matter over in low voices.

"You have been blind, Penzi, not to know your father is displeased with you. He only treats Ponpo this way because you drive him to it. If you will do more reverence to your father he will give you his kinder side."

"But I thought reverence was only for the sacred artists who make pictures on our cave walls."

"That is the reverence our customs demand. But the reverence for your father is a reverence that comes from your heart. Your father is very fond of you, Penzi."

"I suppose he is," said Penzi, looking thoughtfully into the red coals. "Though sometimes he doesn't act like it. Sometimes I wonder—"

"What?"

"Whether it makes any difference that he is not my real father?"

Kansleen gave a little start. "What—what do you mean, my child?"

Penzi stirred the coals of the fire roughly. "You know what I mean, Mother. I'm not really your child. Fangler stole me from one of the tribes far to the south of us . . . when I was still a baby . . . after your own child died."

"Penzi! How did you know this?"

"Hunzk told me. He tells me everything. We understand each other. He will always be my brother. And you will always be my mother, Kansleen. But whether Fangler will always be my father I do not know. It depends—"

And there the conversation had ended, for there had sounded the ugly growl of a cave bear at the entrance of their home. On the instant the household had aroused out of its deep snoring. Everybody went into action. The three little children yelled with fear and delight. The men grabbed their huge stone mauls and raced to the entrance, while Kansleen and Penzi quickly followed with torches in their hands.

Vincent always felt helpless on such occasions. He wasn't seasoned to meeting bears and panthers in hand to paw conflict. He could only get in the way of the others—which might be a disastrous thing to do. So he hung back and watched Hunzk fly into the fray with his heavy stone sledge hammer.

Close behind Hunzk was Torlink, the artist; and back of him stomped old Fangler, shouting orders, already paving the way to take credit for the kill. It was Hunzk, of course, who struck the staggering blows. But Torlink, the artist, was also a good fighter—a fact which amazed Vincent, for Torlink spent his daytimes in a sort of sacred sleepiness, breathing sluggishly through his thick lips while he worked at his picture-making on the walls. Torlink seldom ever spoke; he simply ate and slept and purred by the fireside like a cat. And smiled at Penzi.

Now the party had chased out into the deep snow after the retreating beast, who was probably wondering why he had ever been tempted by the delicious human smell of that warm cave.

Hunzk and Torlink battered at the fallen hulk, and Fangler came after them shouting warnings. "Look sharp, there! He'll get up and charge. Let *me* at him!"

Meanwhile the three children with their bows and arrows surrounded the bear from a safe distance of fifty yards, and shouted at the tops of their lungs that *they* had him and everyone was safe. But no one paid any attention to the three young rascals except Vincent, who by this time was getting a great kick out of the scene, in spite of the snow that was freezing his bare feet all the way up to his knees.

While the big animal was still twitching and squirming, Fangler got in his share of official death blows. No one else could strike the bear with Fangler's master touch. He knew how to kill without damaging too much of the meat. Licking his lips, he re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minded them all that there would be juicy bear-steak tomorrow and for many days to come.

No one doubted it, and no one doubted that the valley would soon hear how Fangler had saved his sleeping family from the ravages of this ferocious beast, and how he had chased it far out into the snow fields and finally overtaken it and killed it—practically single-handed. And this time he had not lost a leg in the bargain!

WHETHER it was the talk that had passed between Kansleen and Fangler, and Kansleen and Penzi—or whether it was the victory over the bear—the spirits of the Fangler cave-hold rose wonderfully. Everyone was gay and busy and friendly. The bright-eyed little Penzi was kind to Fangler and she would tell her friends—within his hearing—how proud she was to have so great a man for a *father*.

"See how much more than most men he is. Even with one less leg, he is the bravest of men and the most skillful of hunters."

Fangler, in turn, ceased to snap at Vincent. He spent more jovial hours before the fire, baking his naked brown shoulders and gaunt hands, recounting his great exploits of the past. Vincent was strangely warmed by his friendship. And one morning after Fangler had slept too close to the fire and had awakened to find that his wooden leg had burned to ashes halfway up to his hip, his friendship for Vincent waxed warm indeed—and Vincent went to work carving out a new wooden leg.

The artist Torlink passed the hours in silent work in his sacred corner of the room. The three youngsters played at killing bears and lions outside the entrance to the cave. Mother and daughter worked the hides up into clothing. Vincent accompanied Hunzk on some of his exploits for game and firewood. Fangler talked to anyone who would listen while he worked at his flints. And the winter days passed away.

On the first bright warm morning Fangler hobbled away with a sack of food slung over his back. He would be gone many days. He would make the rounds of all the caves in the valley to see how the tribe had fared through the winter.

During his tour his ego expanded wonderfully, and he returned after three weeks expecting a hearty reception from his family.

In fact, he had hoped they would see him coming and would have hot food ready. On the last few miles of his homeward journey he could see the dot in the hillside that was his cave. His mouth watered.

He tried to cover the ground faster, but hiking over the rugged terrain on a wooden leg was hard work and his body was sore. Once he slipped and fell into a ravine and covered himself with snowy, muddy water.

But at last Fangler neared the cave. He sniffed at the air and licked his lips, and his watery old eyes brightened. The return of an important tribal patriarch would evoke great shouts of glee, and he had never felt more important. For on this journey his tribesmen had agreed to give him more authority in training the younger generation of hunters and fighters.

Slipping in through the entrance quietly, expecting to surprise Kansleen and Penzi and all the others, Fangler heard the low voice of Vincent. He paused, listened. There was no voice but that of Ponpo. This was strange. He crept closer.

Peering into the main chamber of the cave he could see his entire family seated by the fire. There was Ponpo, in the center of the group, looking into one of those odd leafy objects that he called *books*. Ponpo was getting words out of that book—*he was talking from it*—and he was putting his talk in the clear, simple, beautiful Cro-Magnon language.

On one side of Vincent was Hunzk, peering dreamily into the fire. On the other side was Penzi, leaning so close that her flowing brown hair almost brushed Vincent's cheek. Kansleen was leaning back against the wall, looking upward, her hands locked back of her head. It was curious to see her so hypnotized.

Deep-hued anger flamed through Fangler's crusty old face, and his big-veined hands doubled into knots. He cleared his throat.

Vincent looked up. "It's Fangler!" And he jumped up to extend a greeting, and so did all the others.

But Penzi's excited words blurted forth above everyone else's to crush the moment of greeting to the earth.

"Oh, Fangler! You must hear the wonderful story *Ponpo* is telling us!"

SO it was *Ponpo* that was wonderful, was it? It was *Ponpo* that must have all the praise and glory! No matter if he,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fangler, had tramped all over the valley through melting snow and slushy ravines. No matter if he comes home starved and exhausted after many days. No matter if he is loaded down with all the winter's latest gossip from the far ends of the tribe. It is *Ponpo's* story that must be heard!

"Get food, Penzi," the mother quickly commanded. For in Fangler's flushed leathery face Kansleen read the jealousy and the silent rage better than anyone else. "Your father is tired. He must be fed."

And in that moment Fangler, breathing fire, somehow held his tongue.

Vincent discreetly kept his books out of sight during the next few days. He spent as much time outdoors as possible. Fangler's return had made him feel like an intruder and an outcast. And of course he *was* an intruder.

And yet, he was almost willing to fight to make a place for himself—on the level with Hunzk and Hunzk's generous, robust, big-hearted mother, Kansleen. Yes, and Penzi, the little dickens.

It was a cinch that Penzi was as quick as lightning. The sharp questions she asked about his twentieth century life were amazing. It beat all how she and Hunzk, twenty-five thousand years behind the times, could grasp what he was talking about. All he had to do was give them a few simple illustrations and they put two and two together.

But if he kept on reading that history of human races to them, sooner or later they were going to demand to know what became of the Cro-Magnon race. Or rather, what would become of it!

And what would he tell them then?

Would he dare tell the truth?*

Already Fangler was disturbed over what little he had heard of Vincent's talk. But if Vincent should reveal that, according to his advanced knowledge, the Cro-Magnon race had an unseen tragedy ahead of it—what *would* Fangler and his fellow patriarchs say? They would probably tear up the earth.

"Why are you so troubled?" Hunzk would ask.

"I'm not troubled," Vincent would answer. "Or if I am, there's nothing I can do about it."

And that was, in Vincent's mind, the greatest trouble of all. If the scientists of the twentieth century were correct—if most of the Cro-Magnon race somehow *lost out*, leaving only a few minor traces of what had once been the supreme race of Europe—then, obviously, the tragedy *did* happen. Whatever the mysterious factor was that cleaned house across these valleys, the twentieth century fact that it *did* happen argued that it was futile for Vincent or anyone else to try to do anything about it here and now.

But here again, thought Vincent, was that new allegiance of his cropping out. The very desire on his part to do something for these people was proof of his wish to cast his lot with them.

He had almost ceased to keep regular watch for the time chain, as he had previously done.

But one night the time chain came down, and Hunzk, who had been advised many times to keep on the lookout for it, was coming home from a hunt in time to see it.

Hunzk raced into the cave, crying the news at the top of his big bellowing voice.

"Ponpo! Ponpo! The time stars have come down! Quick! They're out there on the ground by the river!"

Vincent shook out of his heavy sleep like something explosive. He leaped down out of his sleeping shelf in the wall, started to tear out of the cave.

He dodged back to grab his saxophone case, then darted out through the entrance and raced down the path to the river.

Before he had gone far he cut his pace. The time chain was there, all right, but it was already several feet above the ground and it was floating upward with the slow, even speed of a perfectly controlled machine. He was almost too late.

He gazed at it in awe. It had been a full half year since he had seen it, and its first appearance was still a dizzying unreality in his mind.

But here it was again—just as before,

*The mystery of the disappearance of the Cro-Magnons is one of the most baffling that faces science today. According to skulls and bones unearthed, they were a fine, intelligent race, and far superior to any type of human developed on Earth up to then, from simian stock. Apparently, to judge from their artifacts, they were possessed of a knowledge of fire, of weapon manufacture, of tools, and even of clothing, made from skins, and skillfully sewn. And yet, today, there remains no trace of the Cro-Magnon race. Almost overnight, it seems, they vanished from the face of the earth. What great catastrophe overtook them, science is baffled to understand. It is only certain that something *did* happen to them; something mysterious and terrible.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

except that as it shone against the black sky its fading rays seemed to extend deep into a vast unfathomable distance.

Here was his chance! Now he could return to 1941. He could return to Aunt Minnie—oh, oh, that library fine would be terrific now! and he could return Maestro Galancho's Symphony of Time. He could . . .

He stepped toward the time chain and stretched out his hand. Then he halted, his fingers tantalizingly inches from their goal. Did he really *want* to go back? There flashed into his mind, a bit vexingly, the impish face of little Penzi. He grew thoughtful. There *was* a lot to this world—and besides the time chain would come back again. He didn't want to go just yet . . .

Abruptly he found his hesitation had decided for him. Now the time chain was several yards over his head. He couldn't reach it. He was too late—if he wanted to return!

Vincent breathed heavily, watching and wondering long after its little pearls of light had been swallowed up in a ceiling of cloud.

"I'm sorry, Ponpo," Hunzk breathed almost reverently at Vincent's ear. "I know you wanted to go. You should have gone."

"It'll come back," Vincent replied abstractly, still looking into the skies, "and the next time I'll be ready."

CHAPTER V

Shades of Xandibaum

VINCENT HARRISON kept his pledge to build a shelter for himself by the river bank. He moved out of the Fangler cave and resumed life in the makeshift camp that he had built with his own hands.

It was the first time in his life that he had ever actually been on his own resources. But he felt not the slightest desperation on that score, for he had learned a lot about hunting; moreover, Hunzk and other members of the Fangler family were only too anxious to share their bounties with him.

Once out of range of Fangler's ugly thrusts, Vincent again revived an old debate with himself. Did he actually wish to leave this life in favor of a return to the twentieth century?

If he were an intruder and a thorn in Fangler's flesh—*yes*.

But if he were an independent man, providing for himself, becoming an authority on the planting of seeds and the building of shelters and tools—maybe *no*.

There was certainly something more tangible about living in the Cro-Magnon age. Your enemies were things you could see and feel—like cold and hunger and snarling wolves and creeping snakes and hostile men.

Of course there were hostile men in the twentieth century, too. But here among the Cro-Magnon you *knew* who was hostile and who wasn't. And your enemies weren't disguised into forms you couldn't fight back at. None of your troubles here were so elusive as unjust taxes or technological unemployment or political privilege or class prejudice. No, they were chiefly troubles that you could make some impression upon with a stone ax or a bow and arrow or a reasonable amount of hard work.

And so, although Vincent had moved down to the river bank to be ready for the time chain if it should come back again some day, still he was not altogether certain what he would do about it when the time came.

The more he thought about that string of lights, the more he yearned to know whether a definite control of the thing might be developed.

"Probably that was what Xandibaum wondered too," he once told Hunzk, recounting his original knowledge of the scientist. Hunzk listened intently, especially when Vincent related having struck a series of the lights and found himself temporarily sinking in midocean.

Vincent reminisced, "I'll never have a narrower escape than that as long as I live. If I hadn't touched those lights back to red, I'd have gone down for good."

"Probably that is what happened to your scientist, Sandi—"

"Xandibaum. Yes, I think you're right. He was no doubt trying to learn to control the device and it sank him on number twelve—or whatever the case was . . . I've got a theory that every one of those little lights shoots you forward or backward so many thousand years to the very minute—and whatever spot on the earth happens to come up at that minute is the spot where you land."

And from that point Vincent found himself involved in a discourse on the turning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the earth. Hunzk and his three young brothers and their adopted sister were all ears.

It was against Fangler's command that the members of his family came down to listen to Vincent's dangerous discourses. But as often as the old man hobbled away to visit a neighbor, they came. Every page Vincent read from his books whetted their appetite for more.

ONE day Hunzk and Penzi brought a stranger with them to see Vincent's wonderful books. The stranger was a tall, graceful eighteen-year-old girl.

"Her name is Lindova," said Hunzk, and the girl and Vincent gazed at each other. "We have told her about you—how you came through the sky from another time and are waiting to go back. She was afraid to come and see you, but we have brought her."

With characteristic twentieth century modesty, Vincent felt somewhat awkward to be wearing such ragged clothes in the presence of company. His original suit and topcoat had worn away during the past months, until now they were only a patchwork of remnants crudely sewn into a single garment. He felt like a half-naked savage—in the presence of a beautiful native princess.

"I have heard of you, Lindova," said Vincent, smiling. She blushed and shrank back a little closer to Hunzk, who took her hand. Vincent added, "Our friend Hunzk never returns from a hunting trip through the West Valley but what he comes home talking of you. Now that I have seen you, I understand. It is no wonder that Hunzk likes to go hunting in the West Valley."

Hunzk and Lindova smiled at each other and the girl blushed deeply. What a contrast she was, Vincent thought, to that little tom-boy of a Penzi. This girl was ripening into womanhood. Penzi was still a child of fourteen, careless of her hair and dress, as untamed as a squirrel. Penzi usually had a dirty face, and her large hands and feet were always marked with scratches and stone bruises.

The puzzle to Vincent was that Penzi exhibited such a fondness for him. After all, they did belong to two different ages. While Vincent might linger here for a few years, he wasn't going to let himself fall for *any* of these Cro-Magnon girls. A definite barrier would prevent that; namely, the fact that in his highest scale of values all Cro-Magnons were twenty-five thousand years behind the times.

"We have brought Lindova to see your books," said Hunzk as they all settled down in the warm sand in front of Vincent's shelter. Penzi had already slipped into "Ponpo's treasure-box," the saxophone case, and got them.

"Let me show Lindova the funny spiders," said Penzi excitedly.

"All right, the spiders," Vincent snorted. It was curious what an impression that "spider book" had made upon these simple-minded primitives. To them it ranked right along beside the books that traced the history of the human race and described the wonders of the twentieth century cities.

And yet this spider book was, in Vincent's opinion, only a fanciful pseudo-scientific treatise upon future evolution, written by some imaginative scientist, probably cracked, for the purpose of scaring the daylights out of such readers as Aunt Minnie.

"See, the spiders are as big as men," Penzi pointed out gleefully. "That's what will happen in a time many, many, many years to come."

"By that time," Hunzk chimed in, "these great spiders will have become the masters, and the men will be prisoners and slaves."

Lindova looked into Hunzk's eyes seriously. "*You* would never be the slave of a spider, Hunzk!"

"I would not!" Hunzk's muscles tensed and his great brown chest filled defiantly. "I would fight!"

VINCENT smiled. It amused him to see how seriously they took this book. INSECTS, THE FUTURE CONQUERORS OF MAN, by none other than his old friend R. O. Xandibaum! The title suddenly gave Vincent a start. Up to now he had regarded Xandibaum's book as fiction, but now . . .

He had to admit that there *was* a certain logic about it. It was remotely conceivable that the future wars would drive men underground. It was barely possible, he grudgingly admitted, that the deadly gases used as weapons, in conjunction with other counteracting gases, might have a somewhat stimulating effect upon certain types of insect life.

But if he admitted that much to himself, he found it hard to draw the line anywhere in this strange, uncanny argument of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the inevitable R. O. Xandibaum, published in 1940.

Through countless generations, so the argument ran, the insects thrived. They grew larger. Their life habits, particularly those of the trapdoor spider, were adaptable to man's underground habitat. The conditions were far more ideal for them than for man.

Simultaneously, the native cunning of the spider, his highly developed instinct for imitation, and his superior treachery—these qualities underwent an even greater evolution than his physique. In the course of thousand of years he became man's most formidable *potential* enemy.

But the monster trapdoor spider, so the story ran, was clever enough to bide his time. Vincent wondered about that. Why trapdoor spiders? Because Xandibaum *knew*, had *seen* them?

No great intelligence was required on the spider's part to discover mankind's greatest weakness. It lay in man's traditions that caused men to fight among themselves—not from an instinctive urge to kill each other, but from a vicious circle of social pressures that gathered more momentum with every generation.

The monster spiders bided their time, Xandibaum's book predicted. They took advantage of man's wars. And eventually, within a hundred thousand years, they emerged as man's conquerors and exterminators, cleansing the whole earth of the human race. Xandibaum said the future, but his book betrayed a certain vagueness. He wasn't *sure*. Maybe it had been the past. It was this factor that now struck Vincent as pointed indication the book might not be *pure* fiction.

"Don't take it all to heart," Vincent warned, noticing how intently the three handsome Cro-Magnon heads were bent over the illustrations. "It's nothing to worry about. It won't happen for a hundred and twenty-five thousand years—maybe."

"I don't like it," said Hunzk. "The more I think of it, the more I get mad. Why won't these future men fight? *I* would fight!"

"Of course you would, Hunzk," said Vincent, looking thoughtfully far across the valley of cave dwellers. Again the overhanging tragedy became a cloud over his thoughts. Would he ever dare reveal to this proud, strong Hunzk what the twentieth-century scientists knew of *Cro-Magnon's fate?*—that the bulk of the Cro-Magnons were somehow vanquished or lost in the not-far-distant times.

For many minutes the dark-eyed, beautiful Lindova looked at the books without uttering a single comment. At last she said, "My father once had some of these."

"What?" Vincent looked up sharply. "Your father had books?"

"Not books—*bugs*." She pointed to the little black letters on a printed page. "He once had a strange bright stone with these little funny-shaped bugs on it."

"You don't understand," Hunzk put in, proud of his superior knowledge. "These little funny-shaped black things are not bugs; they are words. Your father couldn't have them on a stone. They only come from Ponpo's land. They don't grow like leaves on trees."

"They were bugs like these," said Lindova stubbornly. "They were cut on the strange stone he found."

"No, Lindova," Hunzk insisted. "The weather makes curious marks on stones, but these marks have a meaning—"

"They were the same as these, Hunzk."

The positive note in Lindova's tone was not wasted on Vincent. He rose abruptly. "Lindova, will you take me to your father?"

THE four of them hiked across the hills and up the shallow canyon that was Lindova's home. They found her father, an alert, pompous old man, sitting out in the sunshine in front of his cave making arrows. "I've brought you company, Vorsto," said Lindova.

He looked up at Lindova and Penzi with a sly twinkle. "Why must you girls have no-good men always at your heels?"

"They have come to see you," said Penzi, scruffing old Vorsto's long tangled whiskers. "This one is Ponpo, who has come to us from another land."

"A-a-awf! A stripling with a lily heart. I know all about him, from the day that he washed up out of the river. Begone, you young ones! I must make arrows and hunt before the summer is gone."

"Father," said Lindova, firmly taking the arrow out of his hand, "Ponpo wishes to see the strange stone you found—the stone with all the little marks—"

The old man pulled aside his long bushy beard and pointed to the string of copper beads that hung from his neck. "There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is part of it. . . And here is some more." He displayed anklets and bracelets made of smooth little beads that had evidently been cut from a *plate of copper*. "Had you forgotten, Lindova?"

At once Lindova remembered. Of course, Vorsto had carved one end of the "stone" into ornaments. And the rest he had traded to a traveler from one of the tribes far to the south. She turned to Vincent regretfully. "It is all gone."

Much talk followed. Now that Vincent's curiosity was aroused, he would give anything to know what that "stone" looked like before it was carved into ornaments. He would even be willing to make a journey to the southern tribes if there was a chance that the piece of copper had not yet been damaged.

But this seemed unlikely. Moreover, Hunzk at once warned that a journey southward would be dangerous. This, aside to Vincent.

"Why?" asked Vincent.

"Because," Hunzk glanced toward the cave to make sure that Penzi and the others were out of earshot, "Penzi was stolen from a southern tribe. She would not dare go back or they would take her. She bears certain marks—"

"*She*—what has *she* got to do with it? *I* am the one who would go. No one else would make the journey."

"You do not understand, Ponpo," said Hunzk. "Penzi has chosen you, and she will go with you wherever you go. Later, by the tribal custom, you will ask her to marry you."

Vincent turned his face toward the breeze and fought off the perspiration. The rush of heat through his chest and face was like anger, but Vincent knew that now was not the time to give way to impulsive talk.

"I must warn Penzi that I may not be here long," he said, looking at Hunzk squarely. "When did Penzi make this—er—official announcement?"

'She has not made it yet, and when she does you will hear Fangler's roar all over the valley. But she has told me, for I am a brother to her. She will not change her mind—"

A shrill call from Penzi brought their conversation to a halt. Both the girls and the old men were beckoning to them to come.

"I have them for you!" Vorsto barked. "I no longer have the stone but if it is only the bugs you want—"

Vincent was conducted into the dark cave. Lindova got a torch. Vorsto worked at a shelf until he succeeded in sliding a slab of dry, hard clay onto a flat piece of wood. He carried it out into the sunshine. It was somewhat cracked and crumbled, but Vincent saw at once what it was: the offset which the old man had made from the copper plate upon a piece of clay. He had saved it as a record of his strange experience.

The letters of the impression were in reverse and a few of them were missing, but Vincent quickly pieced the inscription together:

"This place has been visited by R. O. Xandibaum, scientist, 20th century A. D., by means of the time-transfer power of nature, controlled by a device of his own invention. Approximate date of this visit: 25,000 B. C."

CHAPTER VI

Time in His Hands

IT was several days before Vincent and old Vorsto became well enough acquainted to share confidences. But at last the pompous old Cro-Magnon loosened up and gave Ponpo the facts—facts that he had never told anyone before. He had been too skeptical of his own eyes, and he did not care to be made the laughing stock of the valley.

In substance, old Vorsto himself had seen a man appear out of thin air one night as he was returning from a fishing excursion. Or more accurately, the man had appeared out of a circle of little lights. The man had been dressed much as Vincent was dressed upon his first appearance.

The man had seen Vorsto and had obviously been frightened. The man had thrown something down on the earth and then had waved his hand into the curious little line of lights. Instantly, man and lights had disappeared.

Vorsto had watched for the rest of the night but had seen nothing more. Only by daylight was he brave enough to pick up the shiny square "stone" that the strange figure had thrown to the earth.

"I was so sure I saw him that I dreamed his face for many nights afterward. It was a sharp face with a long pointed nose and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a black blotch on the left cheek. All of those details I could see by the light that was floating down past his head." Old Vorsto's eyes glistened as he talked. "But one thing more I remember that has always puzzled me. Why did he throw down only one of the square stones when he had a whole armful of them?"

"From the reading of that stone," said Vincent, "I think he must have had several more stops to make, and no time to waste. But we'll never see him again. By the time he got twelve or fourteen stars down the chain, I'm very much afraid he sank to the bottom of the ocean—and all the rest of his copper plates with him."

"He won't ever come back?" Vorsto asked, much relieved.

"I think not. But if he does, you can step right up to him and call him by name. His name is Xandibaum."

Hunzk looked startled.

"The same man who wrote the spider book! Then it *is* true!"

Vincent looked at him queerly, and a chill ran down his back. Then he shrugged off.

"Maybe," he said, not at all sure of himself.

Penzi and Hunzk and Vincent took their leave. On the way back home they turned the matter over this way and that, and in spite of all of Vincent's efforts at explanation there were still many baffling mysteries.

"Here is one thing I can't get straight," said Penzi. "Are there many time chains or only one?"

"Only one, so far as I know," said Vincent.

"But did you come here on the same time chain that Xandibaum came on?"

"Yes. It's like I told you, I picked up the time chain in Xandibaum's own house. He had evidently started the thing there, for there was a special air shaft that it worked through. And as I've often explained, as soon as it touches the ground or a floor, it reverses its course and climbs back out of reach. Goodness knows where it goes."

Penzi was not satisfied. "You say it always comes down at the same place for each age."

"It must have," Hunzk put in proudly. "We know it has come down by this riverside at least three times, once for Xandi, and twice for Ponpo; and it always came down in Xandibaum's house through the air cave—"

"Maybe there are lots of time chains," said Penzi, "one for each *age*, as you say—"

"But Vorsto disproved that," said Vincent. "With his own eyes he saw the time chain appear with Xandibaum and disappear with him. That means that the time chain jumped through the ages *with* him—"

"All right," said Penzi. "Suppose he *did* drown in the ocean twelve or fourteen *ages* ago. Why didn't the time chain stay in *that* age? How did it get back to Xandibaum's twentieth-century home if he didn't strike it back and go back with it?"

The three of them trudged along in silence for a time pondering Penzi's question. Vincent had no ready answer. He felt sure that Xandibaum hadn't come back and stopped in the twentieth-century or the custodian and the neighbors would have known it.

"Perhaps," said Hunzk, "an ocean wave struck it and sent it back after Xandibaum had sunk out of reach. *It* shot back through the ages but he didn't."

"Possibly," Vincent admitted, "or Xandibaum might have thrown a copper plate at it and struck it back." He recalled his own temptation to try to bring the thing back within touching range by hurling a stone at it. "Something like that *must* have happened," he concluded. "Anyway, I know how to use it now. . ."

He glanced at Penzi, jogging along, tossing her head back and forth rhythmically. She was the picture of rugged, carefree youth, Vincent thought. It was hard to believe that anything could hurt her deeply. He bluntly announced: "I'll be leaving this country as soon as the time chain comes my way again."

TWO years passed.

Two very long years they were—two years that brought Vincent Harrison closer to the soil that surrounded his shelter, closer to the forest that filled the nooks among the hills where game could be found when Cro-Magnon hunters were lucky.

In two years Vincent saw the time chain three times more.

Three times he watched it rise into the skies, sometimes against the blackness of night, sometimes against the blinding white clouds of mid-afternoon. On one of those occasions he lay sick with a high fever,

(continued on page 70)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Joseph Murphy, Minister of the Church of Divine Science, Shows You —

HOW TO PRAY AND GROW RICH!

We have been instructed by Dr. Joseph Murphy to give you the most exciting news you've ever heard — news of his amazing discovery of: **how to pray and grow rich!**

And Dr. Murphy promises you results not in a year — not in a month — not in a week — but immediately. Yes, says Dr. Murphy, "my prayer techniques will bring you immediate results!"

And best of all, there's no need to make any choices between any particular blessings you desire, for, as Dr. Murphy says, "you can be rich beyond limitation, and never have to choose again!"

You say this is too much for you to believe . . . that it's too good to be true? Well then, can you explain the astonishing things that happened after people used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques? Can you explain —

(1) how numerous people make use of a certain formula for paying bills with marvelous results (p. 37)

(2) how a poverty-stricken couple received $10,000 "out of the blue" in response to their request (p. 25)

(3) how a man was able to triple his income in three months with a certain 28-word prayer that takes only ten seconds to repeat (p. 98)

(4) how L.T. used a one sentence prayer to rise from a job as an office boy to the owner of a 50 million dollar company (p. 178)

. . . or explain any one of the scores of wonderful things that happened to people who used Dr. Murphy's prayer techniques!

But we assure you that you won't be able to explain a single one of these mysterious "answered prayers" — you won't that is, until you read Dr. Murphy's thrilling new book "YOUR INFINITE POWER TO BE RICH" . . .

● On page 6 of Dr. Murphy's book, you will find these exciting words:

"All of the case histories presented in my book are of men and women who became rich by using the mental and spiritual laws described in it . . . these people belong to ALL religious denominations . . . they come from every income bracket and social level. All of these people have amassed great wealth!"

● On page 24, you'll read of a woman out of work, trying to support three children, with the bills piling up rapidly. No sooner did she utilize a single prayer given to her by Dr. Murphy than a surprise gift of $5,000 in cash came out of the blue, from an almost forgotten relative she had not seen for 15 years!

● On page 98, you'll discover how a working man TRIPLED his income in just three months, through the power of a certain prayer. This prayer contains 28 words. It takes only ten seconds to repeat. You will find this prayer given word for word in the book.

● On page 109, you'll read the true story of Maria, a little 8-year-old Spanish girl in New York, who wanted nothing in all the world more than a new bicycle. Her parents could not afford such a gift, but Dr. Murphy, who was then her next-door neighbor taught her how to Ask . . . and her prayer was answered . . . she got her brand-new bicycle ONE DAY LATER.

THERE IS NOTHING IN LIFE THAT CANNOT BE YOURS, IF YOU KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR IT —

These are only a brief sample of the scores of true, heart-warming and moving case-histories of the power of Living Prayer in action. Dr. Murphy's book, called "YOUR INFINITE POWER TO BE RICH", gives you the full techniques with which you can contact the Power capable of answering your every need.

You will find these powerful prayer-techniques truly beautiful, reverent and inspiring. And you will find out for yourself that — incredible as it may seem — THESE PRAYERS DO WORK. They ARE answered! Time and time again, skeptics have tried — simply tried — and found to their utter amazement that Dr. Murphy truly has in his hands the lost key to a Bible secret forgotten for ages.

We do NOT expect you to take our unsupported word for this. We urge you to PROVE TO YOURSELF, our words are true. We want to put a copy of Dr. Murphy's book into your hands. All we ask is that you TRY — just try — using one of these prayers. Fill out and return the coupon below.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY —

Meredith Enterprises, Inc. Dept. S-UF7
227 East 45th St, New York, N.Y. 10017

Gentlemen: Please rush me Dr. Joseph Murphy's wonderful book **Your Infinite Power To Be Rich.** I understand this book is mine for only $6.95 complete. I will examine this book for a full 30 days entirely at your risk. If at the end of that time I am not satisfied I will simply return the book for every cent of my money back.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ **Send COD. I enclose $2 deposit.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN SPACE

by Duncan Farnsworth

"I QUITE definitely advise you to give up the idea, Mr. Kelvin," the commander at Interplanetary Space Base One told Claude as tactfully as he could. The commander was a short, stocky, grizzled old gentleman who held no delusions about science and the progress of interplanetary unity.

"But you say you already have a man stationed on Asteroid Eighty," Claude Kelvin answered with mild determination. "If he can endure the, ah, dangers and rigors of his post I don't see why I shouldn't be able to do likewise."

The commander looked at the tall, wiry, bespectacled young man standing before his desk. He looked at the delicate, nervous hands of the chap, noted the studious solemnity of his expression. He glanced again at the permit lying on the desk. It was signed by a staggering array of important names. He shrugged and gave up the battle.

"Very well, Mr. Kelvin. There's nothing I can do to prevent your risking your neck. This permit allows you to do that. But I might remind you that you'll be stuck on that God-forsaken little blob of matter in space for two months. Our zone space cruiser puts in there only every ten weeks."

Claude Kelvin had his own ideas about how the strange Krickacks ought to be treated—all of 'em wrong!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That should be quite satisfactory, Commander. My studies will take all of thirty weeks on Asteroid Eighty."*

"And the man we have stationed there," the commander broke in for one last reminder, "is not the, ah, most gentlemanly sort of fellow, you could desire as a companion in your solitude."

"It pleases me," said Claude Kelvin with obvious pride, "to think that I can get along well with any of my fellow beings. It is no particular trick."

The Commander sighed.

"And please," he begged, "watch yourself with the *krickaks*.** They're a deceitful, treacherous, nasty lot."

"Has your man there found any difficulty with them?" Claude inquired.

Again the commander sighed. "No," he admitted. "But there have been tales. And don't forget, our rayhouse there is well equipped with enough weapons to keep them quiet."

"And what was the name of the rayhouse keeper," persisted Kelvin.

"Interplanetary officer Grimes."

Claude Kelvin took out a small black notebook and entered this fact.

"Thank you, Commander. I'm certain that Officer Grimes and I will hit it off admirably."

The commander watched him leave the office. He shook his head, sighing. "You don't know Grimes," he muttered. "And you've never seen a *krickak!*"

* Asteroid Eighty—One of the Rayhouse Stations in the asteroid belt. Unsettled, savage, and—except for the rayhouse—almost as it was before the first Earthmen decided to use its strategic position as a beam signal outpost for the space lanes of that none-too-well charted area.—Ed.

** Krickaks are the still savage, "uncivilized" inhabitants of a certain desolate outer asteroid belt of which asteroid 80 is a key beam base for the space lanes in that vicinity, Krickaks got their name from the first Earthmen to observe their almost electrically controlled bodies and hear the loud "crick-crackling" that is the vibratory sound that emanates from their strange bodies. —Ed.

THE INTERPLANETARY zone cruiser was two days out on its inspection journey, and its sole passenger, Claude Kelvin, leaned against the enclosed deck railing and explained his presence to a junior officer who paused to pass the time of day.

"I'm working on a fellowship grant," young Kelvin declared. "You see, my studies have been a combination of biochemistry and sociology."

"They are?" said the junior officer, unimpressed.

"Yes, that's why my work on this lonely little asteroid outpost is going to be so important," Kelvin went on, warming up. "You see, it's long been a theory of mine that bio-chemistry is the key to complete interplanetary union, so to speak. Ever since the discovery of the interplanetary cosmos, and since man's conquest of it has been completed, there has been constant trouble and misunderstanding among the peoples of the interplanetary systems. Look at all the wars that were fought before we Earthmen finally won our conquest."

The junior officer nodded his head in bored agreement.

"That was due solely to the fact that we didn't *understand* the peoples of other planets," Kelvin said with growing warmth. "We were unable to find useful niches for these peoples in the mode of life we had imposed on them."

The junior officer concealed a yawn.

"And you intend to solve that problem—on the *krickaks?*"

Claude Kelvin nodded eagerly.

"Through bio-chemistry, the very computation of their vastly different physical selves, and a mixture of applied sociology, I will find the key. I know it!"

The junior officer frowned.

"But why pick an asteroid infested with *krickaks?*" he persisted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Claude Kelvin smiled tolerantly.

"Because," he said, "I have heard that they are the, ah, most unmanagable group of space creatures in this particular asteroid chain."

"You're right about that," agreed the junior officer. He half shook his head and muttered something to himself as he took in the lean, ascetic, studious appearance of the young scientist. Then he touched his hand to the visored peak of his uniform cap.

"Well, good night, Kelvin. My watch is coming up."

Claude Kelvin raised a hand to detain him, while fishing rapidly into his tunic pocket for his small black notebook.

"What did you say your name was?" young Kelvin inquired.

"MacQuales," said the junior officer. "Sub-lieutenant MacQuales is the name."

Claude Kelvin painstakingly entered this in his little black book. Then he smiled.

"Thank you, Officer MacQuales," he said. "Good night."

As Sub-lieutenant MacQuales moved down the enclosed deck to the bridge of the space cruiser, he was still shaking his head and muttering to himself dubiously.

ASTEROID EIGHTY was almost exactly as the commander at the Interplanetary Space Base so graphically described it. It was nothing more than a God-forsaken little blob of matter in space. Being one of the fungus infested variety of asteroids, it seemed to Claude Kelvin, as he watched it growing larger from the deck of the zone space cruiser, as being nothing but a gray, greenish, ugly blob at that. But Kelvin smiled, undaunted.

Five minutes later the atomic motors of the zone space cruiser suddenly stopped throbbing beneath Claude's feet, and the space craft slowed to a complete stop.

Claude was dressed in the space gear that had been given him at the Interplanetary Base, and consequently didn't hear the approach of Sub-lieutenant MacQuales when that young officer came down the deck toward him.

MasQuales was clad in space gear also, and tapping Claude on the shoulder he indicated the communications button on his own radiphone. Claude nodded and switched his on.

"Well," MacQuales said, "are you ready?"

Claude was slightly startled.

"We're not moored on Asteroid Eighty, yet," he protested. "There's plenty of time."

MacQuales made a face that might have been a grin.

"Moored, hell. There's no way of mooring on that damned little jungle. We halt our zone cruiser here, then cover the rest of the distance in the ship's lifeboats."

Claude considered this, it seemed to MacQuales, a little unhappily. Then he shrugged.

"Very well, I'll gather my gear and equipment."

"Got much?" MacQuales asked.

"Oh, lots of it. A lifeboat should suffice, however," the tall young man replied.

"We have supplies to deliver to interplanetary officer Grimes, you know," MacQuales explained. "This trip wasn't made especially for your benefit. However, I suppose we can use an extra lifecraft."

"Thank you," said Claude Kelvin. Then he was off hastily to get his equipment.

THE journey from the zone space cruiser to the squat little rayhouse

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on Asteroid Eighty was a bumpy one. Claude Kelvin, in the first of the lifeboats, shepherded his equipment like a cackling mother hen over a brood of chicks. He spent the trip dashing back and forth along the slim craft from the helmsman to his gear, and back again, constantly admonishing that space veteran to take it a little easier, to watch where he was going, and to remember that the Kelvin equipment was delicate stuff.

At length, however, both the lifeboats moored safely at the tiny aluminoid space landing platform that stretched circularly around the squat duralloy rayhouse.

On the platform, waiting eagerly for them, was a space-helmeted figure of surprisingly small stature. His radiphone was tuned to theirs as they stepped from the lifeboats.

"Glad to see yuh," the voice boomed. And Kelvin blinked to think that such a small man could have a voice so deep. "Where's my new bunk mate?"

Sub-lieutenant MacQuales had stepped over beside Claude Kelvin, and the two of them advanced toward the short fellow. "Ahoy, Grimes," MacQuales bellowed cheerfully. "Glad you're still alive."

And interplanetary officer Grimes, face wreathed in a huge grin, stepped up to them, hand extended.

"This is Claude Kelvin," MacQuales said. "Kelvin, officer Grimes. I hope you to hit it off well, for you'll certainly see enough of one another."

Claude extended his hand, looking down on the short, rugged, little Grimes.

"I'm sure we'll get along well," he said. "And I hope I won't be in officer Grimes', ah, hair."

Grimes was as bald as a doorknob. A fact the red-faced Claude Kelvin didn't realize until he'd finished his remark.

"Joker, eh?" Grimes looked up unsmilingly into Claude's face.

MacQuales was spluttering redly, forcing back his giggles.

And then Grimes turned, motioning toward the square, airlock door at the front of the rayhouse.

"Come on," he said. "Join me in a drink before you go, MacQuales."

They followed Grimes up the landing as the space stevedores went on with the unloading behind them. Minutes later they removed their helmets as they stepped out of the final airlock into the comfortable and compact quarters of the rayhouse.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Grimes asked Claude, waving a hand at his quarters.

"Very nice. Very nice indeed," said Claude, "but—"

"But what?" Grimes frowned.

"Will there be any room for me to set up a laboratory?"

"There's a sort of cellar below," Grimes said. "You should have plenty of room there."

BY now the three had climbed from their space gear, and Grimes was rummaging around in a duralloy compartment, bringing out three glasses and a spiraled bottle.

"Venusian stuff," Grimes said, holding the bottle high as he brought it back to a table with the glasses.

"Good," MacQuales observed a few minutes later, smacking his lips and holding out his glass for a refill.

"Damned right it is," Grimes retorted. "If those *krickaks* knew I had this in stock they'd have been raiding the rayhouse every night."

Claude's ear pricked up with sudden interest.

"The *krickaks* like liquor?" he asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Love it," Grimes said, "when they can get it."

MacQuales looked meaningly at Grimes.

"Young Kelvin has an idea that he's going to make the *krickaks* one big happy part of our interplanetary family."

Claude dove head first into the conversation. With breathless enthusiasm he proceeded to tell Grimes exactly how he was going to "socialize" the *krickaks*.

Grimes listened to all this with a straight face. When Claude finally finished he said,

"I think you're going to be a little disappointed, Kelvin. Those *krickaks* are a bad lot. I don't want them within a mile radius of these quarters."

"But my work," Claude began protestingly.

"The work of running this rayhouse is of first importance around here, Kelvin," Grimes snapped. "And anything that might interfere or endanger it is out."

"A one mile radius," Claude said reflectively. Then; "I understand, perfectly, Grimes. But if I wish to go to the *krickaks*, in their own habitat—so to speak—that will be permissible, won't it?"

MacQuales was gazing neutrally at the ceiling.

Grimes poured himself another drink.

"That will be entirely up to you. Your neck is your own. If you want to risk it, it's your own business."

"Thank you," Claude said stiffly.

"But," and Grimes raised a forefinger in warning, "if you should get in trouble out there," he pointed toward the door, "I can tell you now not to expect any help from the rayhouse."

"I understand perfectly," said Claude, and his lips were compressed whitely.

MacQuales suddenly stood up.

"The supplies and Kelvin's equipment should be stored by now," he said. "I'll be running along." He began to climb into his space gear once again. Before putting on his glassicade helmet, he added: "I'll see you two gentlemen in another ten weeks. Goodbye and good luck."

Grimes and Claude watched him enter the first airlock, both silent. Then he was gone. Grimes picked up the bottle of Venusian whisky. He was silent as he refilled his glass.

"The fact that this rayhouse keeps going, the fact that I've never let these lightbeams falter once, has saved thousands of lives of space travellers. I don't intend to let this Rayhouse blink off—even once. So to repeat, you'll have to take care of yourself if you get in trouble out there."

Claude Kelvin stood up stiffly. Forgotten were his theories of getting along with people. He didn't like this stocky, rugged little Grimes, and no amount of reasoning could make him do so.

"I heard you the first time," said Claude. . .

FOR THE NEXT four days relations between Grimes and Claude Kelvin didn't improve. They ate their dinners in silence for the first two days. And after several sharp exchanges, they ate at different intervals after that. In the meantime Claude was acquainting himself with the rayhouse and Asteroid Eighty.

It was with no little surprise that Claude found the rayhouse to contain a complete arsenal of atomic rifles and electro-handbombs. He remembered the commander at the Interplanetary Base having remarked that the rayhouse was safe from the mischief of the *krickaks* because of its supply of weapons, but somehow he hadn't imagined

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that such a complete store of killing gadgets would be on hand.

And Claude had seen the great ray turbines which kept the beams of the rayhouse sweeping uninterruptedly out into space. These were of scientific interest to him, but due to Grimes attitude, Claude didn't have much chance to inspect the apparatus as carefully as he'd have liked. Tersely Grimes had explained their operation to him, indicating in no uncertain terms that he didn't want Claude browsing around such important equipment.

But by the third day Claude had his own minor laboratory set up in the cellar of the rayhouse, and found himself engrossed in the first steps of his own work. Grimes didn't bother him in this. In fact the hard-bitten little space officer didn't even bother to inspect Claude's project.

And it was on the fourth day, late in the afternoon, when Claude had finished climbing into his space gear and Grimes came down from the ray towers to prepare his own meal, that the two had their longest conversational interchange since the departure of the space zone cruiser.

"Going some place?" Grimes asked.

"I've decided to have a look at Asteroid Eighty," Claude answered briefly.

"And the *krickaks?*" Grimes persisted.

"And the *krickaks.*"

Grimes didn't answer him immediately. He went over to the small supply chest at the corner of the room, rummaged around for a moment, and returned bearing a brace of atomic pistols.

"Here," Grimes said. "You'd better takes these with you."

Claude's lips went stubbornly flat.

"I don't believe I'm going to do any hunting," he said frigidly.

Grimes hesitated only an instant. Then he shrugged, jaw gone hard.

"Suit yourself," he replied. He hurled the weapons back into the supply chest.

But Claude had a word or two to say.

"Those guns," he declared, "and the arsenal you keep here, are all an indication of just why the *krickaks* have never been friendly."

"That's why they've kept their distance these past ten years," Grimes said evenly.

"If you treat them that way," Claude went on, "you can always expect trouble from them. When this little asteroid chain was first discovered did anyone make any attempts to establish friendly relations with the *krickaks?*"

"They were born to make trouble at every chance. They're as nasty and treacherous as any group of interplanetary natives still existing," Grimes said with even calm. "I took over this post ten years ago, after eight men had died in the space of a decade trying to keep it going. I haven't failed. And I don't intend to."

Claude stepped over to the airlock, opening it. Then he stepped into the chamber. He had a vision of obvious disgust painted on Grime's space-seared features as the door closed. Then he waited for the second airlock to open.

WHEN he stepped out onto the landing platform that encircled the squat bulk of the rayhouse, Claude had dismissed his irritation at Grimes' stupidity from his mind. There were now other and more interesting things to consider.

Such as the thick tangle of green gray jungle that surrounded the platform on every side. A weird scramble of lush and harsh vegetation that was ominously silent.

There was a ladder at the rear of the platform. A ladder that ran down to a path at the fringe of the strange

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jungle. Claude moved over to this and deliberately began his descent to the path. He looked up once, as he clambered down the ladder, and caught a glimpse of Grimes—in the ray towers—peering out through the glassicade shell at him. Then Grimes' head disappeared.

Claude smiled quietly to himself. Grimes was like the rest of the old time space officers. He'd been part of the group who discovered this asteroid chain, charted it, fought through it, and more or less "civilized" it. To him the whole thing was a simple matter of force and conflict.

Claude's feet touched the ground, and he released his grip on the ladder. Then he turned and looked around, staring through the tangled underpath that led down into the morass of wild vegetation. He smiled again, a little tightly, and started down that path.

As he walked, his hand found the radiphone button on the front of his space gear and switched it off. Then he opened his vibration panel at his chest. This would permit him to hear any sounds that came through the atmosphere around him.

The tangled underpath grew steeper, and darker, but Claude walked on. Sounds came to him through the vibration panel. Faint scratching sounds, as Claude saw small, curiously colored insects slithering along the surface of great rough leaves.

And then there was a definite crackling coming through the vibratory panel.

An involuntary shiver of excitement ran down his spine. *Krickaks* were somewhere in the vicinity! He'd never seen anything but radifoto pictures of these creatures, but he knew—almost as surely as if he'd heard it before—that their physical mechanisms were marked by the peculiar crackling sounds constantly vibrating from their weird bodies. Their very name *krickaks*—came from the first auditory impression they'd made on Earthmen who'd discovered them.

Claude moved onward. Ten yards more and he stopped. Ahead, up on the summit of the path, was a *krickak!*

The luminous shine to the creature's body made him easily visible in the semi-darkness of the strange surroundings.

He was of standard size, about as tall as the average Earthman. But his body was round, globular, and his head was of the same shape. He had round eyes, almost an inch in diameter each, and they were lidless and staring.

There was no nose to the creature. And for a mouth there was a constantly open oval, perhaps an inch wide and three inches long. Its legs were short and straight, with apparently no joints. And its arms were long and trailing, reaching almost to the ground.

The crackling vibrations grew louder as it regarded Claude. Now Claude moved forward once again, his arms extended wide, space guantlets open, showing that he was unarmed.

Then, less than five yards from the *krickak,* Claude stopped. He fished into the small knapsack pocket on the side of his space suit.

The crackling vibrations grew in intensity, as though in alarm or fury.

Claude brought forth a bottle—from Grimes' Venusian stock—and placed it ahead of him on the ground!

The crackling vibrations were now querulous, and after an instant's hesitation the *krickak* moved forward with lightning speed, seized the bottle, and darted back. Claude smiled. Grimes hadn't been lying. The creatures liked this stuff.

Now Claude took a few steps toward the *krickak.* The creature didn't re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

treat, and its vibrations were steady. Claude took a deep breath as he stepped within arm's reach of the *krickak*. He kept smiling. This was working splendidly. Grimes should see him. It would change a few of his asinine notions.

Claude extended his hand, with the notion of placing it on the *krickak's* shoulder. And then, with incredible speed, the creature whirled and bolted off into the underbrush!

Claude stood there gaping foolishly, startled by the abruptness of the *krickak's* departure. Then he shrugged in good humor.

"The first gesture has been made," he said to himself. "And now there's a slight groundwork to start on."

He stood there for perhaps ten minutes longer, listening intently for any sign of the return of the *krickak* or the approach of any others of the strange breed. Then he turned and retraced his steps down the sloping path toward the rayhouse.

GRIMES WAS waiting for Claude when he returned. The grizzled little space officer seemed irritable and anxious about something. He was pacing back and forth in the narrow confines of the living quarters as Claude emerged from the airlock and into the room.

"What'd you find out there?" Grimes snapped.

Claude was startled. Then he was smug.

"I encountered one of the oh-so-dangerous *krickaks*," he said casually. "In no time at all I had a friendly footing established. The creature fled, of course, but not until I'd convinced him I was harmless."

"I'm surprised your hide is still intact," Grimes snapped. "Because there's something stirring on Asteroid Eighty, Mr. Kelvin. And not space mice!"

Claude essayed his most superior smile.

"Really? You know, Grimes, I believe that you've been living in a world of your own imagination for these past ten years. When I return I'll recommend a vacation for you back in civilization. It might do you some good."

Grimes forced back the words that choked his throat. His jaw was a solid line of muscle. He jerked his thumb as he turned on his heel.

"Come on, Kelvin. I'm sure this will be of interest to you."

Still smiling in smug complacency, Claude followed Grimes up the staircase that led to the ray towers. The two were wordless until they reached the observation platform above the vast turbines that generated the ray beams.

Grimes walked over to an instrument panel at the front of the platform.

"Look at that," he invited, pointing to one large dial on the panel in particular.

Claude bent over, frowning at the dial. He straightened up.

"I'm sorry," he smiled, "but I don't get it."

"You're supposed to be a bit of a bio-chemist," Grimes said sarcastically, "and I imagine you have sense enough to note a wavering instrument needle when you see one."

Claude nodded.

"I'll agree, the instrument needle *is* doing quite a bit of wobbling back and forth. But what's that got to do with bio-chemistry?"

"You've seen a *krickak?*" Grimes asked tersely. "You've heard the crackling vibrations emanating from its body?"

Again Claude nodded.

"Bio-chemistry has proven that the *krickaks* are physiologically 'juiced' by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some electrical current that gives them their life impulse. There's some sort of dynamo in them that's just as important to them as a heart is to us." Grimes stated.

Claude was somewhat taken aback. Grimes seemed to know more than he had given him credit for. He listened as the grizzled little officer went on.

"Well because of that electricity, which is a very real force, the body vibrations of the *krickaks*—when especially active — usually register here in the rayhouse on our instruments. It's not enough to affect our instruments unless they are especially strong in number and unusually excited about something."

Claude found himself looking again at the wavering needle.

"I haven't seen those instruments react as strongly from those devils in a very long time," Grimes said. "Something is afoot, I'll stake my heart on it."

FOR a change, Claude Kelvin didn't know quite what to say. He opened his mouth and closed it, wordlessly.

Grimes was staring at him.

"What did you do when you ran into that *krickak* out there this afternoon?"

Claude gulped.

"I gave him a present, er, a token of good will."

"What was it you gave him?"

"Some whisky—a bottle of it—belonging to you."

Grimes glared in disgust. His fists bunched and he stepped forward slightly.

"See here," Claude said hastily, backing a pace, " I intended to reimburse you for it. I'll pay you this instant if you don't believe me."

"You blundering jackass!" Grimes spat the words. "I never should have let you poke your nose outside the rayhouse. Do you think the price of the stuff meant a damned thing to me?"

"Well, then," Claude said hastily, in an effort to dismiss the affair, "I don't see why you're making such a melodramatic fuss about everything. Surely a little whiskey, just a bott—"

"One bottle of whisky," said Grimes, emphasizing each word with ominous clarity, "is enough to make an entire tribe of *krickaks* crazy drunk for a week. One drop to a *krickak* can cause enough hell for two days' shooting."

"How was I to know—" began Claude.

"I shouldn't have expected you to know anything," Grimes said in disgust. "That was my mistake!"

Again Claude opened his mouth, ready to protest hotly. But Grimes leaped suddenly to the side of the flickering instrument needle on the panel. It was wobbling twice as madly as before.

Grimes' language was not delicate.

"See here—" Claude managed.

"Shut up," Grimes snapped. "Get downstairs and bring up a pair—no four— atomic rifles!"

Something in Grimes' tone made Claude wheel automatically and turn hastily down the spiral of the staircase. When at last he was pounding up the stairs again he had divested himself of the rest of his space gear and was bearing four atomic rifles.

Grimes grabbed two of the rifles from his hand.

"Know how to shoot?" the grizzled little space officer snapped.

Claude nodded mutely. Grimes shoved two of the rifles onto the railing before him. Then he reached out and threw a switch. The entire landing platform outside and beneath the rayhouse was flooded with light. The fringes of the jungle around it were also revealed.

And Claude gasped at what the sudden flood of light revealed. A swarm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *krickaks* had climbed to the landing platform and were milling about the duralloy sides of the rayhouse. Grimes had been busy pulling forth a pair of space helments and brief garb from under a compartment by the panels. He handed one of these to Claude.

"Climb into that," he snapped, "and we'll roll down the tower turret and get down to some plain and fancy dealing with those *krickaks!*"

Claude suddenly stiffened stubbornly.

"How do you know those poor devils mean any harm?" he demanded.

"They're just out there to thank us for the whisky," Grimes blazed sarcastically. "Do as I say!" he thundered.

Dazed, Claude climbed into the rig Grimes had tossed him. Then Grimes grabbed him by the arm.

"Look at them closely," he ordered. Claude peered down at the *krickaks*. "See those small sticks they carry in their hands?" Grimes demanded.

Claude nodded.

"Those are weapons, and nasty ones at that," Grimes explained. "When one's pointed your way, duck. There're electrical charges in those innocent sticks that completely paralyze a man who's unfortunate enough to be in the way when they hit!"

Claude nodded again, punctuating his emotions with a gulp.

THEN Grimes touched a button and the glassicade turret around their tower swiftly dropped down on all sides. Grimes leaned over the railing, atomic rifle at his shoulder.

Hastily Claude took a post several yards away from Grimes, picking up an atomic rifle and assuming the same pose.

"They haven't seen us yet," Grimes called. "They haven't grown used to the light." And with that he carefully picked out the foremost *krickak* on the landing platform and squeezed the trigger on his atomic rifle.

The *krickak* dropped flat on its round stomach, a shower of sparks splashing from its body like blood. It lay there inertly, its comrades milling around it in surprise.

"They're looking up at us now!" Grimes yelled. He squeezed the trigger on his atomic rifle again. Another *krickak* splashed sparks and rolled off the platform edge into the tangled underbrush of the jungle.

But Claude hadn't moved his rifle from its position at the rail. He was staring popeyed at the two fallen *krickaks*, at the showers of sparks that spewed from their bodies.

Grimes turned his head toward Claude momentarily.

"Dammit," he bellowed. "I thought you could shoot. Let fire!"

A small red ball of electrical fury suddenly zipped past Claude's helmet. Then another, and a third blazed through the chromealloy railing at his elbow.

Claude trained his rifle on a *krickak* almost directly beneath him. The creature was pointing the stick-like object in its hand up at him. Claude squeezed jerkily on the trigger. The *krickak* went over backward like a toy soldier before a cork. Again there was the shower of sparks, and again Claude's jaw hung agape in astonishment.

Grimes was firing with coolness and accuracy. One by one he picked off the leaders of the group on the platform. His atomic rifle was glowing at the duralloy barrel point, so he put it down and picked up his spare.

Another shot. Another shower of sparks.

The small blazing electrical pellets were smashing all around them now, and Claude was firing with mechanical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accuracy that surprised him. And as each *krickak* fell backward, sparks showered forth and Claude shook his head unbelievingly.

Then finally, Claude was aware that the platform was bare of *krickaks*—living *krickaks*, that is—and that Grimes had stopped firing. Claude could see other *krickaks* poking their round heads out of the underbrush spasmodically, while their comrades who were able to leave the platform alive retreated in confusion.

Grimes found the button that brought the glassicade tower turret up around them once again, and was pulling off his helmet a moment after it closed. Claude followed suit, and when he'd climbed out of the rest of his gear Grimes was gazing down at the *krickak*-strewn landing platform with grim satisfaction.

"Not bad for a lesson to them," he said.

CLAUDE was a little sick. They were, after all, living, thinking creatures, even though their bodies were hardly human. He nodded white-faced.

"Do you think they'll be back?" Claude asked.

Grimes nodded positively.

"Of course. This is just the first of a series of attacks. The light will keep them frightened off for a bit. That'll give you a chance to catch a few winks below."

Claude hesitated.

"Look," he blurted finally, "if I was in any way responsible for this, I'm sorry."

Grimes looked at him expressionlessly.

"Skip it," he said. "That can be ironed out later. Right now there's a job to be done. We've the rayhouse to protect, and we can't expect any help from the zone cruiser, since it won't be back for another six days yet."

"Surely they can't do anything against weapons such as these—" Claude began.

"They're tricky devils," Grimes said noncomittally. "You never know what to expect. There's an interspecial liner—one of the biggest passenger crates in this chain—due past here in another two days. We'll have to keep the beams going until then, or there'll be hell loose for better than a thousand of our Earth pals."

"But—" Claude began, aghast.

"Isn't that a noble enough reason for staying alive two days?" Grimes asked sarcastically. "We've got to keep the rayhouse going. Get below and grab some shut eye!"

Claude Kelvin, considerably shaken, started toward the spiral staircase. He paused before stepping down.

"Those sparks," he said. "There'd be a shower of them, like blood, every time we got one of the *krickaks*. Why?"

Grimes shrugged in annoyance.

"Never stopped to figure it out. The hooch you gave them is responsible, I'm reasonably sure. When you plug 'em when they aren't crazy drunk, nothing but a bluish liquid oozes out."

"But why—" Claude began.

"What a hell of a thing to be worried about at a time like this!" Grimes snapped in sudden vexation. "Get below!"

Claude got below.

IT WAS SOMETIME in the early morning when Claude Kelvin, sleepy eyed and frightened, scrambled up the spiral staircase to the ray towers where a weary Grimes still stood watch.

"I'm sorry if I took too much sleep," Claude began.

"Skip it," Grimes growled. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

handed Claude the atomic rifle he'd been resting against the platform railing. "If anything comes up, wake me. Don't try to handle it yourself."

He disappeared down the spiral staircase.

Claude peered down into the dense foliage that surrounded the landing platform at the bottom of the towers. There, somewhere in the darkened thickness of the weird jungle, were the *krickaks* he had intended to use for study.

He noticed that the bodies of the roundly formed creatures who'd been slain on the platform the night before were still there, exactly as they'd fallen. Then he turned his attention once more to the tangled gray-screen morass of strange jungle.

The minutes crawled by. The hours oozed along. A cramp came into Claude's back, and a sweat of strain and anxiety clouded his spectacles. He stretched, took a firmer grip on the atomic rifle. Grimes had said that the space liner would be passing in two days.

That would mean some time tomorrow. They would have to hold out until tomorrow. And suddenly Claude was aware of the resignation of his thoughts. Until tomorrow. And after that, supposing the *krickaks* got them?

Claude Kelvin shuddered. Up until this very moment in his young life the thought of death had been but contemplation in a science laboratory. He had studied death in relation to other people. Never to himself.

It wasn't pleasant. Claude took off his spectacles with one hand and wiped them carefully on his tunic. Then he placed them back on his lean, ascetic nose and resumed his contemplation of the jungle foliage.

He looked over his shoulder for an instant. The needle on the big dial of the instrument panel was flickering with the same intensity as it had the day before. He shuddered, thinking of those pop-eyed *krickaks* lurking out there, watching him. He wondered how he had escaped death when he'd ventured out there.

Suddenly Claude felt a sense of guilt assail him. Here he was wrapped up in consideration of the salvage of his own hide when the lives of thousands were at stake. For he knew, even though Grimes hadn't said so in so many words, that the stopping of the rayhouse beams would hurl the luxury space liner into an unnavigable morass of small, interwoven asteroid belts. The liner would undoubtedly crash on one of these webs without the guidance of the ray beams.

Claude saw a round, globular body appear against the gray green thickets on his right. He turned swiftly and squeezed the trigger of the atomic rifle. The figure disappeared. Claude was unable to tell if he'd made a hit or not.

Another hour crept by, and then another. Claude was finding it difficult to keep the haze from his spectacles. They reflected too much light. Far too much light. It made everything seem hazy, dim, dim.

CLAUDE came awake with a start. It might have been due to the loud crackling vibrations that seemed to be everywhere around him. Or it might have been due to the *splat, splat, splat* of an atomic rifle firing rapidly somewhere on the spiral staircase.

Darkness was setting in, and Claude realized even as his eyes blinked open that he'd been guilty of horrible weakness. He'd fallen asleep on watch!

He lurched erect, grabbing his atomic rifle and rushing to the staircase. It was clear to him now that that was where the noise of the rifle and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crackling vibrations of *krickaks* came from.

The *krickaks* had stormed the rayhouse as he slept—and somehow they had gained entrance!

Claude was at the staircase, now, and he looked down to see Grimes, his tunic streaked with sweat, backing up the stairs while blazing away at a swarm of *krickaks* who were trying to follow him!

He had only one emotion, a vast overpowering sense of relief at the realization that his negligence hadn't cost Grimes his life. Then Claude hurled himself recklessly down the steps until he stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Grimes, blazing away at the hideous round, open-eyed faces that pressed up at them.

The two worked their way back up the staircase, step by step, rifles growing hot in their hands. Occasionally electrical pellets of fire swept around them as the *krickaks* fought back.

Grimes looked at Claude once, and the contempt that was in his glance was withering.

And finally they had gained the towers, and Grimes was pulling a thick, duralloy hatch cover over the staircase, clamping down bolts on all sides of it, while the *krickaks* milled around in crackling angry frustration on the other side.

Grimes stood back, then, and Claude saw that the grizzled space officer's right shoulder was seared gruesomely, sickeningly, almost to the bone.

"They hit you!" Claude exclaimed.

Grimes snarled his reply.

"While *both* of us were asleep!"

The crackling below the hatch cover over the staircase was receding. The *krickaks* were evidently going down to the living quarters of the rayhouse to reconnoiter.

Grimes was whitefaced, and his eyes were fever glazed. Claude watched in horror as the veteran space fighter slumped sickly to the platform. Then, suddenly, something was strangely, ominously silent.

Grimes looked up at Claude, his teeth biting down the anguish of his wound.

"That sudden silence is the stopping of the ray turbines by our friends the *krickaks*," he said bitterly. "The beams have stopped." His speech was labored, thickening.

Claude stood there, wordless, filled with burning shame and self-accusation.

"The beams *can't* stop!" Grimes muttered thickly. "The liner'll probably be passing tonight. Gotta have beams—gotta!" He made a futitle attempt to climb to his knees. This failed and he tried to drag himself toward the hatch cover. "Start the beams myself," he muttered, "*have* to start 'em!"

And then interplanetary officer Grimes lost consciouness, and sprawled face downward on the platform of the towers. Claude was sobbing blindly in shame and rage as he bent over the inert figure.

HE DRAGGED Grimes' body over to a comparatively safe corner of the platform, then, still carrying his atomic rifle, he rummaged through one of the compartments beneath the instrument panels until he found what he sought.

When he walked over to the hatch that covered the spiral staircase he had a haversack of metacloth slung over his neck. In the haversack were two dozen elecro-hand bombs. Then, deliberately, Claude set to work unfastening the bolts Grimes had thrown over the hatch. Moments later and he was prying the hatch off the opening.

Claude Kelvin marched down the spiral staircase unmolested. The *kric-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kaks were gathered in the living quarters. He could hear the wild confusion of crackling that went on down there, and the smashing of furniture and the breaking of bottles. They were probably having a hell of a time on Grimes' Venusian whisky.

Passing the level on which the ray turbines were stationed, Claude saw sickly that they had been utterly smashed by the *krickaks*. He had feared, yet expected that. The crackling grew louder. He was but a few yards from the living quarters. The first *krickak* appeared at the bottom of the stairs, just three steps away.

Claude fired the atomic rifle from his hip, straight into the *krickak's* face. There was a shower of sparks. Then other round heads appeared at the doorway. Claude fired rapidly, efficiently, his mind a blaze of fury. The faces showered sparks, fell back.

Claude stepped into the living quarters. He hurled his first electro-handbomb at a group of some fifteen *krickaks* milling about in the far corner of the room. The explosion was terrific. Somehow the walls withstood it. Claude was hurled to the floor by the force of the shock. Then he was crawling to his feet, rifle still at his hip, firing again and again at the now terrified creatures. Sparks showered everywhere.

Those who could were swarming toward the airlocks through which they entered. The jam there gave Claude time to pick off each *krickak* like a clay duck. None got out.

And in the smoke and sparks and horrible confusion, Claude Kelvin, no longer an ascetic young man, looked eagerly about the room for another *krickak* to kill. There were none.

Claude dropped his rifle, his electro-handbombs. He grabbed the thin tendril-like arms of four of the creatures and dragged their inert bodies up the spiral staircase.

He dropped them on the landing where the useless ray turbines stood. Then, with the grim unseeing stare of a man under hypnosis, he went to work. His brain was bare of all but one thought. The beams had to be there for the liner.

SUB-LIEUTENANT MacQUALES was naturally dumbfounded when he arrived at the rayhouse on Asteroid Eighty some four days later. The place was a scene of incredible confusion and chaos. And young Claude Kelvin, tattered, smoke-streaked, and delirious from overwork and hunger, was incoherently unable to explain much.

But the rayhouse was operating. Its beams were flashing with consistent and surprising strength. And officer Grimes, with a wound that could only have been inflicted by a *krickak*, was also beyond anything but delirious babbling.

There was also an extremely peculiar odor about, and absolutely no *krickaks* except the two found beside the ray turbines. The odor was of burning electrical matter—almost fleshy—and Venusian whisky.

It wasn't until later that young Claude Kelvin explained that the electrically powered bodies of the *krickaks* —soaked in whisky—had provided excellent, sparking, dynamos to replace the turbines they'd destroyed, and had kept the ray beams sweeping forth from the towers and out into the space lanes.

As officer Grimes put it, after he and Claude had buried the hatchet at his bedside,

"The kid knew nothing at all about sociology, but boy what a whiz at biochemistry!"*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TELECULT ····· POWER

automatically brings you everything you desire . . .

Riches, Love, Fine Possessions, Friends, Power, Secret Knowledge, and much, much more? See for yourself!

A staggering miracle has happened! A brilliant psychic researcher has discovered a secret so awesome, so powerful, that it is said to bring you everything you desire.

Reese P. Dubin, in his daring new book, "TELECULT POWER," lays bare this magic secret and reveals how it can bring you fortune, love and happiness! How would you like to sit in your living room, give the command for love and have your loved one instantly appear at your side? Or give the command for money and suddenly find a big, thick roll of bills in your hand?

"GREAT WEALTH AND POWER CAN BE YOURS!"

For many years, Reese P. Dubin searched for a way to call upon the invisible forces at work all around us. These investigations brought him knowledge that goes back to the dim recesses of the past.

One day, to his astonishment, he discovered that he could actually broadcast silent commands, which others instantly obeyed! "No one could escape the power of this amazing secret," says Mr. Dubin. "Everyone — high or low, ignorant or wise — is subject to its spell." He commanded others to sleep, get up and come to him, talk or not talk — and obey his silent wishes!

Working relentlessly, Reese Dubin succeeded in perfecting a new kind of instrument — an extension of the mind — called a Tele-Photo Transmitter. An instrument that concentrates your thoughts and sends them, like streaking bullets, to their destination.

STARTLING PROOF

Mr. Dubin explains how this fantastic Transmitter has already worked for countless men and women, in all walks of life. "It's worked every time and it will work for you too! Almost overnight, you can start to multiply riches, win love, favors, gifts, new friends — anything you ask for!" Mr. Dubin relates. And he gives you specific case histories:

- Diamonds and jewels have appeared, seemingly out of nothing!
- A farmer received a pot full of gold!
- An old woman used this secret to regain lost youth!
- Another teleported a gold jewel box to her home!
- A balding man renewed the growth of his hair!
- One user summoned a man to her — out of thin air!
- Another actually saw behind walls and over great distances!
- A man gained the power to hear the unspoken thoughts of others!

"YOUR EVERY DESIRE FULFILLED EASILY AND AUTOMATICALLY!"

With Telecult Power, the mightiest force in the Universe is at your command! Reese Dubin reveals how to use the Transporter to teleport your desires from the invisible world. "Dial any desire — call a Photo-Form — then sit back, relax and watch this powerful secret go to work!"

DAZZLING JEWELS AND RICHES APPEAR

Margaret G. dialed Photo-Form #3 for jewels. Rich, glittering diamonds and other precious stones literally appeared at her feet! A pair of gold earrings she found . . . a pearl necklace gift dropped right on her front lawn!

MAKES 56 STRAIGHT PASSES AT DICE

Albert J. dialed the desire for good fortune and rolled the dice 56 times, without losing once! For the first time in the history of Las Vegas! He walked away with a cool $500,000.

SEES OVER GREAT DISTANCES

A Scandinavian girl used the invisible power to pick up actual sights, from behind walls and over great distances. She could see the scene at her home — several hundred miles away — as clear as if on TV

UNBOUNDED POWER!

Reese P. Dubin, discoverer of this uncanny Telecult Power, wanted to see if the Transmitter could do the seemingly impossible — produce an actual living person for him! He dialed the Transmitter and waited. In a flash, the door burst open, and standing before him, real as life, was the object of his desire!

ASTOUNDING "NO RISK TRIAL OFFER"

Experience for yourself the incredible power of the Telecult Power Transmitter. Order now and we'll rush your personal copy of Reese Dubin's fantastic book "TELECULT POWER" for a 30 day "no risk" examination. See for yourself the power of this amazing book. You must be pleased. You must be delighted with all that "TELECULT POWER" can bring you . . . within 30 days . . . or return for a full refund.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY—

Telecult Power, Dept. S-UF7
227 East 45th St, New York, N.Y. 10017

Gentlemen: Please rush me Reese Dubin's wonderful book **Telecult Power.** I understand this book is mine, for only $6.95 complete. I will examine this book for a full 30 days entirely at your risk. If at the end of that time I am not satisfied, I will simply return the book for every cent of my money back.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ **Send COD. I enclose $2 deposit.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BRIGADE of the Damned

By ED. EARL REPP

Somehow Klamper, discredited scientist, knew the answer to this deadly plague, and Hale fought to clear his name.

CHAPTER ONE

A Call from the Dark

KLAMPER had not walked half a dozen blocks when he knew he could stand no more. In a terror born of his own conscience, he stumbled against a lamp post and covered his writhing face with trembling hands. A sob of unutterable horror convulsed his unkempt, elderly figure and his throat ached with emotion.

Even tight-clamped eyes could not blot out the horrible night mare that engulfed him. The rumble of those ghastly trucks pounded on his eardrums like distant thunder. The frightful wailing of sirens chilled him to the marrow, adding to the tumult of his inner soul. In his troubled mind was a monotonous accusation that kept challenging him: "You could help, Klamper! *You could help if you only would!*"

Arnold Klamper tore his eyes open again and stared at the frightful scenes about him. Main Street, Los Angeles, center of the honkatonk district, was a sordid enough place ordinarily. But tonight it was a scene transplanted from Medieval London during the Dark Ages and the Black Plague.

Even as he watched, trucks lumbered past loaded with grisly burdens . . . figures that lay in shapeless masses of arms and legs. The street lamp poured sudden brilliance over them and threw the sight of yellow skin and gaping mouths at him.

"The Yellow Plague!" Klamper muttered. "Why don't they stop it? *God!*"

His gaze reeled across the street as a man stumbled from a doorway to sprawl across the curb with his head and arms dangling in the gutter. He was ignored by the sparse crowds. Most of them were too sick or drunk to care. Klamper felt a cold hand clamp about his vitals as a dwarfed figure scuttled from the shadows to go hurriedly through the unconscious man's pockets.

The horrible similarity between these sights and those of the seventeenth century in England ate into his mind.

It was small consolation to the terror-ridden metropolis that the unknown disease which had seized hundreds of persons in the past six days was a yellow plague instead of black. Certainly every other likeness was there.

Taken completely without warning, city health officials had been powerless to stem the rising mortality list. Rich and poor alike, those living in the slums or luxurious residential districts, were victims of the blindingly swift bone dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ease that turned healthy bone tissue to pulp and killed in ten hours. In the first two days of the plague, three hundred died. Tonight the total stood at four thousand.

Ambulances were incapable of taking all the stricken to the overflowing hospitals or the dead to mortuaries. Uncared for and ignored, victims might feel the first gnawing pangs at noon and be dead before midnight. Ordinary trucks had to be called in to take the dead to improvised burying-grounds. Like shapeless masses of yellow dough, as boneless as protoplasm, they were heaved in by terrified drivers.

Physicians and scientists had given up. Without a single recovery recorded, with no symptoms identified, they could only wait.

A sort of insanity took possession of the city. Crime and vice ran amuck. Streets which had been crowded with business men and shoppers were given over to drunken revelry and insane debauch . . . both spawned by fear. Day ceased to exist; Los Angeles was a city of ghastly night.

AND through the scenes of horror stumbled Arnold Klamper, his seedy clothes, long gray hair, and care-lined features hiding the brilliant mind that was his. The old scientist had ideas about this awful destruction, theories that might stop it, if he were right . . . but he had every intention of dying with those ideas.

Ten years ago, when he was the most famous bacteriologist in the country, the city had scorned and ridiculed him. They had branded him a butcher of children, because his discovery, that might have saved thousands from the ravages of infantile paralysis, had killed ten, instead.

How could he know that the serum that had straightened the poor, twisted limbs of a score of youngsters would suddenly go bad—killing ten he was fighting to save? A politics-controlled medical board, knowing he had already been selected as their head for the next term to clean up conditions in public hospitals, had seized that tragic blunder to ruin him.

Headlines screamed carelessness . . . butchery . . . negligent homicide The public took up the cry. Within a week Klamper lost his position as head of a great hospital, was stricken from the rolls of licensed surgeons, and found himself friendless

The shame and misery of those days were fresh in his mind as he stumbled down Fifth Street toward his basement quarters. He tried to see it as poetic justice, fought to keep his mind from delving into the vast libraries of medicine he had absorbed, never to forget. He had suffered before; his persecutors could do it now!

But all he could see was the endless line of hospital trucks, carrying dying men and women away. Muttering to himself, Klamper staggered down the cement steps to his rooms. Then, just inside the doorway, he brought up short, his keen eyes probing the half-light of the parlor.

Out of the shadows floated a voice that brought his head about.

"Dr. Klamper! Then I was right!"

Even before he had seen his visitor clearly, the scientist was stammering a denial: "No, you are wrong — the name is Petersen! What are you doing in my rooms? I ask you to leave, immediately!"

He snapped on the overhead lights. Then his startled vision took in the tall, slender figure of a dark-haired man standing before his worn sofa. Klamper's gaze flicked shrewdly over an intelligent forehead, keen gray eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles, a firm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mouth and chin that relieved the rather scholarly look of the man. He held a small surgeon's bag under one arm.

And somehow Klamper knew immediately that he could not fool this man with the probing eyes. He went closer, head canted to one side. "Who are you?" he put bluntly.

THE visitor smiled for the first time, the expression seeming to lighten his severe features instantly. "Hale is the name," he introduced himself. "Dr. John Hale. I would apologize for breaking in, but these are days when most men are glad to have any visitors except the most common of all—Death."

Klamper settled himself doggedly on his large feet, thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest. "I've heard of you, Hale," he ground out. " 'The Laboratory Sleuth,' or something of the sort. Isn't that what they call you?"

Dr. Hale nodded, stooping to set his bag on the floor. "That's the name the newspapers seem to prefer," he admitted, "although I'm no more of a sleuth, probably, than any other chemist or physicist. My searches just go a little farther afield."

A "little farther," stated the case modestly. Since that time years ago, when some enterprising reporter had written enthusiastically of his profession, that might have been termed "roving laboratory analyst," he had seen duty on all science's battle-fronts. The nickname "Laboratory Sleuth" stuck.

Hale's mind was a vast card index, from which he could pluck instantly any scrap of knowledge he had ever heard. The tremendous extent of his learning made it possible for him to help many of the metallurgists, archaeologists, textile manufacturers, criminologists, and the host of other learned men who called on him when disjointed facts refused to fall into place.

Hale's keenly analytical brain probed to the kernal of a problem with lightning rapidity. That factor had saved one man from death, and brought more than one criminal to justice. But there were lines, eloquent of strain, about his mouth tonight.

"How did you find me?" Klamper suddenly demanded. "I've been known as Petersen for years. No one knows I'm in Los Angeles."

Behind his spectacles, Hale blinked owlishly. "I knew you were in the city because I saw you once, three years ago, in a crowded store. Knowing that, I found you easily. A man of your mentality would find it impossible to give up his work completely. I inquired at the leading bacteriological supply houses and found I knew all their largest buyers except two or three. 'Petersen' was one of them."

"And now that you've found me—?" Klamper inquired archly.

"I've come to ask your help." The answer would have been flattering to almost any scientist in the country. But Arnold Klamper stiffened where he stood.

"Can any man have the gall, the brass, to ask me to—to help *the city that ridiculed me?*" he bit out acidly, his face working. "These are the people that ruined me, you understand—that drove me to hide here in this hole!"

"I understand this," Hale came back quietly. "Three men engineered your disgrace. All are in the penitentiary now for graft, and embezzlement of public funds. In the eyes of everyone you are vindicated now. Yet you propose to punish an entire city of two million for the crime of three men!"

"As long as I live," the older man clung stubbornly, "those headlines will be before me. The public howled for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them. For a week I even dwarfed the greatest news story in history—the landing of space ships from Venus. The welcome of men from another world had to wait while they baited me. No, Hale, it's no use. I refuse to help—even if I could!"

DR. HALE came quite close to him, studying the knitted gray brows and glittering eyes. A faint half smile drifted over his lips. "Revenge isn't the trouble with you, Klamper," he said softly. "It's fear! Fear that if you try to save sick men and women you'll only kill them!"

The old surgeon seemed to wilt a little. His eyes were suddenly haggard. "You're — you're mad!" he croaked.

Hale brushed the remark aside. "I wonder if it would make any difference to you," he brought out, "if I told you that many of your brother scientists, less gullible than the public, always believed your serum was tampered with?"

Klamper's face was white, now. His breath came raspingly. "But that would mean murder!" he gasped. "It would mean—" his voice struck a wild, eager note, "it would mean I didn't kill those children at all!"

There was a glowing warmth of sympathy in Hale's bony features as he nodded. "It's been too long ago to prove it," he said earnestly, "but not too long to demonstrate that you are still the greatest bacteriologist and bone disease specialist in the world! I came here because there isn't another mind in the country capable of coping with this yellow horror. Perhaps—perhaps you are the man! I could prate about the glory to be gained by stopping the plague. But I know nothing would mean so much to you as saving thousands from death, with the obliteration of that one error—if it was an error—as a reward!"

A tense hush seemed to compress the shabby room. Then Hale's words were dropping through it: "Will you help, Klamper?"

And the old surgeon's words, whispered and alive, came after a moment: "Yes — yes, I'll help. And thanks, John Hale!"

CHAPTER TWO

Rof Thurlo

AFTER a second, Klamper turned brusquely away, as if to hide the sudden moisture in his eyes. "I have thought some about this yellow death," he admitted sheepishly. "A few experiments, analysis of a sample of infected bone the health department gives out so readily, and—the usual things. I—let me show you!"

Hale followed him eagerly through a dingy hall to a small laboratory. His step was springy with impatience, for he sensed that Klamper had found something more important than he was willing to admit.

The room was low-ceilinged, with dusty beams almost brushing the top of Hale's head. In battered cupboards lining the walls were hundreds of bottles and pieces of equipment. The equipment was the most ancient Hale had encountered in years. But in one corner was a table covered by a glass hood, under which were more modern articles.

Reverently, Klamper removed the shield and took up a large beaker containing about fifty cubic centimeters of gleaming pink crystals. "This little jar of matter caused me many hours of labor," he frowned. "As well as I have been able to tell, it is the substance that turns the victims' bones to pulp. At

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first I could not isolate it, it was so volatile.

"By accident, I exposed the vaporizing substance from my retort to ultra violet light. Immediately, these tiny crystals began to settle out of the steam! Yet they are so quick to vaporize that I have been unable to analyze them. If I could do that—"

Hale was already opening his surgeon's bag. Wherever scientists gathered to gossip, that little carry-all was famous. In it were a dozen analytical devices of the laboratory sleuth's own invention, as well as the more common varieties of equipment. High- and low-temperature thermometers, an electroscope for determining radioactivity, half a dozen expensive cameras loaded with various films, and a powerful .375 revolver were among the objects.

Hale was lifting one of his own ingenious inventions from a leather case now. Shaped almost like an automatic pistol, it had a prism in the barrel which shot diffracted light onto a photographic plate in the breach. Developed almost instantly, the plate revealed to his trained eyes the composition of the substance he had shot.

"If you'll place that beaker over a Bunsen for a moment," he clipped, "I'll see what the spectroscope says."

KLAMPER hurriedly got a burner going and placed the pink crystals on the ring-stand. Within five seconds a delicate vapor lifted from the beaker. Hale levelled the spectroscope at the pastel cloud, snapped the trigger.

Quickly, then, he operated a small plunger in the breech. In less than a minute he was drawing a thin strip of photographic paper out the bottom of the grip. He laid it on the table beneath a strong light. Their heads bumped as both bent over it to read the spectograph.

"Nitrogen!" John Hale gasped. "Pure nitrogen, in some isotopic form!" He stood grimly staring down at the little ladder of colors, his eyes on the faint "flags" beside the ordinary nitrogen lines.

Klamper reared up sharply from the table. "Then no wonder!" he blurted. "All this nitrogen from a section of bone no longer than a foot. No wonder these people die with their bones a liquid. I have seen deep-sea divers dying of 'the bends' because they had a little too much nitrogen in the blood. Yet this graph shows the dead man's body was literally saturated with the gas!"

Hale was examining the crystals curiously. "I've heard of no such isotope as this," he muttered. "Gas, in a crystalline form. . . . But whatever it is, how does it get into the body? It takes hundreds of pounds of water pressure to affect divers. Here, we are a hundred feet above sea level!"

Klamper pinched the bridge of his nose with thumb and forefinger. "If we could just find that out," he murmured. "If we knew why some are affected and others not. We drink the same water, breathe the same air—but who knows? Perhaps in the end we will all be infected, and die!"

They were silent, darkly absorbed in a vision of a city inhabited only by yellow corpses. In the hush, emphasized by the hissing of the Bunsen burner, a truck rumbled by . . .

The sound seemed to jar John Hale to action. "There is little we can do here," he protested. "Your equipment scarcely seems adequate for the problem we are fighting. I'd be honored if you would consider my laboratory yours, as long as you care to use it. I have about everything we will need . . . guinea pigs, micro-scales, furnaces. And God knows we will need it, Klamper!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is the biggest menace any scientist has ever battled!"

THEY went out into the night streets again, into weird, unforgettable scenes. Before they reached Hale's apartments in the Wilshire district, they had seen a dozen bodies lying in the streets, ignored by the half-hysterical passers-by.

They passed Westlake Park and saw the benches held by men who sprawled on them in attitudes of complete despair. Once a car almost struck theirs as its driver either went crazy or lost consciousness. The last they saw of the car it was churning through the shrubbery toward the lake.

The apartment house was one of the most luxurious in the city, chosen by Dr. Hale for its blessed privacy. An automatic elevator lifted them smoothly from the deserted lobby to Hale's suite on the top floor.

But as they hurried into the magnificent chrome-and-glass lab, the scientist dragged to a halt. Then he was walking forward slowly towards the strange-looking man who stood by a glass wall overlooking the city.

"Rof Thurlo!" he blurted. "I hardly expected you."

He was conscious, as he watched the long, gangling figure, that Thurlo's goggling red eyes were not on him. They were racing over the elderly bacteriologist in the rear, with something like suspicion in them.

Rof Thurlo was a strange figure in the worldly setting. Born to power on the planet Venus, his body was ill-adapted to Earthly conditions.

Long, bony limbs were sheathed in heavy, lustrous black material that seemed to blend into the glassite globe shielding his head. The atmosphere of Thurlo's home planet was some twenty degrees warmer than that of the world he had been visiting and studying for ten years. Hence he wore a thick armor veined with resistance wires to keep his body always at one hundred and twenty degrees.

Inside his glass helmet, filled with humid gases, was a pinhead hardly half the size of Hale's, though the glittering, red eyes were the size of dollars. Hale was thinking, now, that it was those eyes which had first planted the seeds of dislike for Rof Thurlo in him.

And with the Venusian scientist's first words, he found his dislike rushing over him again.

CHAPTER THREE

City of Hate

"MY people grow frightened," came the guttural tones, studded by the sharp clicking of his helmet-valve at each word. "I have come for help. Many are ill."

"I'm sorry, Rof Thurlo," he said shortly. "If I could possibly help, I would. But I told you yesterday I had learned nothing."

He watched anger play with the emaciated blue lips and greenish jaws, and found a kind of satisfaction in seeing it there. Five years before, when an Oriental invasion threatened the coast, the Venusians in their city fifty miles north of Los Angeles had refused to lend the secret of their dreaded "potential energy bombs" to the government.

"Who is that?" Thurlo rasped suddenly, pointing at Klamper.

Klamper muttered angrily, impatient to be at work. Dr. Hale set his bag down with an air of finality and ground out, "The name is Petersen, though it doesn't matter. And we have a lot to do, and would appreciate being left alone."

He turned brusquely away, finding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rubber aprons for them both. Then he was brought around again as the Venusian pursued, "Perhaps I might help, if I look on. Certainly you can not mind—?"

Hale tossed an apron to Klamper. "All right! I thought your scientists might offer help when the plague first struck a week ago, but you apparently waited until your own people were affected. But better late than never. Here's an apron."

Klamper's face glowed as his eyes filled with the high-domed, shining workshop. Everything he could desire was there. He rubbed his gloved hands together. "Guinea pigs!" he declared. "A hundred of them. I must start my inoculations before another hour."

Difficulty devilled every move they made. For an hour it was impossible to dissolve the strange substance in any liquid, that the inoculation might be made. Finally Hale achieved it.

Rof Thurlo, his face valve clattering excitedly, goggled over Arnold Klamper's shoulder as the last of seven dozen guinea pigs was submitted to the test. The injections were made in the epidermis, the cuticle, the bone itself, and given in the form of gas.

The Venusian's bluish-green features writhed into a ghastly smile. "Very clever, Doctor," he complimented. "Too clever for an ordinary 'Dr. Petersen.' I can imagine no one less skillful than an Arnold Klamper employing such efficiency!"

JOHN HALE was the first to break the silence. "I might have expected this from one of your lower-class laborers," he breathed, "but from Rof Thurlo, head of a city of five thousand progressive Venusian scientists—! I take it your curiosity, for some inexplicable reason, led you to follow me to Klamper's rooms?"

Thurlo's face froze. There was menace in his ruby eyes. "Curiosity," he clipped, "is the soul of science."

"But this particular form of curiosity," Dr. Hale snorted, "seems to have curdled my hospitality. If you'll leave the apron as you go."

Just for a fleeting instant the otherworldling's hand sought the bulbous grip of his energy pistol. Then his glass-shielded head canted forward. "Certainly. But if our scientists discover anything useful, we shall be eager to help you."

Stiffly he left the laboratory.

"Like you were during the war scare," Hale muttered darkly. "Klamper, that fellow and his underlings arouse a wholesome, violent hatred in my veins. They were content to cool their heels while our people alone suffered. Now that the Yellow Plague has come closer to them, they want to collaborate with us. Even to the extent of following well-known scientists to see what they discover!"

"Odd that he should have known me," mused Klamper. "I can't see what—*Hale!*" he shouted suddenly. "Look at those guinea pigs!"

The laboratory sleuth swung his gaze to the large table, partitioned by glass plates into cubicles. Immediately he was lurching forward to seize one of the infected animals.

Already its eyes showed a peculiar amber color, its gums a pale yellow! It was breathing abnormally.

Hale crossed the room in a dozen long-legged strides. Before a small fluoroscope table he stopped, while his fingers darted over the controls. He placed the rodent on the frosted glass plate. Klamper crowded in beside him.

Then, before their eyes, a strange thing took place.

From the webs of veins that showed like tiny red threads in the animal's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

body, seeped a myriad of minute bubbles. It was like watching the effervescing of champagne. The droplets melted together to form long, oval-shaped pockets; then the whole mass of bubbles seemed suddenly to settle on the guinea pig's bones and surround them in gaseous cases.

John Hale's breathing was stopped, momentarily, as he saw those tiny pink crystals begin to settle upon the slender bones. Within two minutes, the entire skeleton was encrusted with the barnacle-like formation. Nor did the activity stop there.

The nitrogen isotope appeared to eat its way into the bone tissue like an acid. Cavities appeared, then they were filled with crystals. Abruptly there was no bone left. Just an angular skeleton of crystalline threads. And even as they watched, the crystals faded and a lumpy pulp remained. . . .

SILENTLY, Hale snapped off the fluoroscope and turned a gaunt face to Klamper. The old scientist clenched his fists.

"Is it any wonder they could not find the secret!" he exclaimed. "Even I, with thirty years of analyzing bone diseases, diagnosed it as some form of divers palsy. This is something infinitely more horrible!"

"Horrible, yes," Hale murmured. "But what in God's name is it?"

Klamper's pinched eyes sought the cavy again. He was silent a moment, as if arranging his thoughts. "It is a substitutional process," he summed up finally. "The nitrogen possesses the power of disintegrating the main constituents of the bone, throwing them into the blood, and usurping their place. Once that is done, the crystals again revert to gas.

"I should have suspected something like this from the yellow pallor of the victims' skin. Nitrogen takes the place of oxygen in the blood-streams, thus breaking down the hemoglobin in the red corpuscles."

Hale broke in, "But how can we stop it? There must be a remedy."

Klamper's shoulders slumped as he went toward the dissection table. "There is no remedy," his dejected voice came back. "It is similar to 'the bends' in this: that once the nitrogen is taken into the body, it must bubble off in the blood-stream.* Unless, of course, sufficient pressure is exerted on the victim to keep the gas in solution. Such a pressure would crush a man instantly."

"I take it we've got to discover where this stuff is coming from. Prevention is our only hope." The impatient exclamation that was in his throat died there, as his glance fastened on the glass cubicles of guinea pigs.

He stalked closer, to stand staring down at the black and white menagerie. Abruptly his long body stiffened. "There's our answer!" he burst. "Klamper, look at this! Only a dozen of them have been affected. The ones we fed the stuff to through the mouth!"

* The bends are one of the greatest dangers of diving. It is caused by the change in pressure in the depths. If a diver were to come up too fast, he would find the nitrogen in his lungs forced into his blood stream in the form of bubbles, and would be in danger of death. The treatment is simple, being accomplished in a pressure tank which imitates the pressure of the depths, and prevents the nitrogen from forming bubbles. More recently, especially in the case of Max Nohl, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, inventor of a new type diving suit, the danger of bends was eliminated by substituting helium gas with oxygen, and eliminating the nitrogen. *Since helium will not form these deadly bubbles, it was possible to disregard the usual rules of lifting a diver slowly, to allow the nitrogen to work out of his system in normal fashion.* Nohl set a new world's depth record of 420 feet on that attempt. Undoubtedly, the gas used here was an isotope which performed its work much more efficiently, and without the need of saturation by pressure.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the bacteriologist merely shook his head. "What does that mean? That the nitrogen is entering victims' bodies through food or water. Yet all the food in the city can't be contaminated. And we drink the same water—"

"*Do* we though!" Hale broke in hoarsely. "All the water I drink, for instance, goes through a water-softening plant in the basement of this apartment house!"

A LIGHT of hope broke in Klamper's face. "And I seldom drink anything but coffee or milk — except distilled water, sometimes, when I'm in the lab, and it's handy! That could explain why some have been stricken and others not! Boiling water would vaporize the nitrogen."

"*Nitrogen!*" Hale's lips formed the word, though he scarcely whispered it. His angular jaw grew flushed. "Klamper," he breathed, "do you know why Rof Thurlo and his people have that bluish skin? Because there isn't a red corpuscle in their bodies! Oxygen kills a Venusian. Their own atmosphere is nearly a hundred per cent nitrogen, an impossible food for our type of blood. Their helmets are filled with the gas, their city is blanketed under an artificial atmosphere of it. Who would know how to impregnate water with it so well as they?"

"You aren't suggesting—"

"*I'm convinced that this is Thurlo's idea!* Kador, their city, is hardly a mile from the aqueduct where it skirts the Tehachapi Mountains. What would prevent them from poisoning the water and moving into the city when the plague had weakened us sufficiently? Why, with a start like that, they might branch out to take other cities—how do we know where they would stop?"

He swung to his carry-all and took from it the revolver he had had to fall back on more than once. His face slipped into grim lines as he pocketed the gun.

"The way to kill a poisonous plant is to strike at its roots," he gritted. "I'm going to Kador, and Rof Thurlo is coming back with me—as a hostage."

"Is that wise?" Klamper put in quickly. "Perhaps a detail of police—"

"—would bring down a barrage of Potentar bombs!" Hale interrupted. "Surprise is the important thing tonight. It's a job for one man."

Arnold Klamper shook his head. "For two men," he amended. "I may be no spring chicken, but I'm not too old to be of some use in a scrap!"

"For a misanthropist of ten years' standing," Hale chuckled, "you made the switch to altruism in an awful hurry. Let's hope the next step isn't martyrdom—for both of us!"

UNDER the black hood of a moonless sky, Kador lay like a luminous gray mushroom against the steep foothills of the Tehachapi Mountains. Through the goggles of their oxygen masks, Hale and Klamper could see it clearly as they stood in a fringe of oak trees close by.

Like enormous badminton nets, two copper screens rose on tall towers at each end of the city. Between the nets, covering the city like a thick, hot fog, was the perpetual mist of nitrogen and other gases the Venusians breathed.

The heat of the city was apparent even out here. Resistance of the heavy atmosphere to the current flowing between the two giant electrodes produced a temperature of one hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit. Without that stifling heat and the poisonous envelope of gases cloying the city's streets, not a Venusian could live more than an hour.

The buildings emerged from the fog

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as they crept past the outskirts of Kador into the activity of the city. They were like ugly, mud igloos. Fashioned as Venusian structures had been built for centuries, they lay in a random scattering of various-sized hemispheres of cement.

Here and there, as they crouched in the shadows, the scientists could see the fantastic, elongated men shambling about. None wore helmets or heavy clothing here. They were dressed in yellow spun-glass uniforms.

There were evidences everywhere of unusual activity. Small Venusian skyships made a long line before a row of hangars, each one seemingly ready to fly at a moment's notice. There was not a man in sight who did not carry the long-barreled, heavy force pistol brought from Venus.

A sense of nearness to disaster clutched John Hale as he slid from shadow to shadow. Time grew short . . . deadly short. That thought was pounding through him when he stopped at the side of the huge dome known as the Palace of The Six.

"Lord, this heat!" Klamper muttered.

Hale grunted in sympathy. The terrible warmth of the atmosphere sucked the sweat out in a sticky film all over his body. Perspiration flowed down his forehead and got in his eyes. He felt as though he were baking in an oven.

Decidedly he thrust the apathy of his body down and trod ahead. Entrance to the Palace was through a tunnel slanting down from the street. At the end of the corridor the walls flared back into a blue-walled room. Four doors faced them in the curving wall confronting them.

Hale's first impression was of a far-off roar coming from somewhere in the building. He had been here before; but never had he heard this noise, nor felt the floor vibrate as it did now.

Tensely he moved ahead. In the next moment he was whirling, as a Venusian's nasal voice struck his ears:

"Earthman—what do?"

CHAPTER IV

Into the Cone

IN a little alcove at the side of the door stood a scowling Venusian guard. He came forward now, gun in hand. One bolt of energy from that pistol would agitate every atom in Hale's body, tearing him to pieces like a haystack in a whirlwind.

Somehow John Hale put a smile on his lips. He advanced to meet the spindly giant. "I have news for your Master, Rof Thurlo!" he explained. "We have broken the plague!"

The guard jerked to a stop. Shock froze his green features. "This true?" he gasped.

Hale nodded excitedly. He took a paper from his coat pocket and held it toward the Venusian. Read this!" he replied.

Suspiciously, the other slid ahead, keeping his gun ready. He took the paper in his left hand.

In that instant John Hale moved. His right hand clamped on the Venusian's left wrist as he slid under the outstretched arm. He shuddered to the zooming passage of an energy charge. Then he had heaved on the other's arm and flung him into the wall.

The man uttered one shrill squawk as his head caved against the ragged blocks in the wall, torn loose by his shot. Limply he slid to the floor, a thick green syrup oozing from his split head.

Klamper gasped: "Listen! Someone's coming!"

Hale seized the energy pistol and faced the four doors. But it was diffi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cult to tell from which the noises came. All he knew was they must do something quick!

"Might as well try this one!" he proposed.

He flung an end door open and they sprang through—to crash into the arms of a dozen Venusians!

THE struggle consisted of a dozen chopping blows by the green men and a few feeble efforts by Klamper and Hale. Half-conscious, they slumped to the floor.

The taunting voice of Rof Thurlo furnished Hale strength to glance up. The Master stood with legs widespread, his scrawny arms crossed.

"So you've found out," he leered. "Most convenient for us that you chose to try this insane thing. You two have been on my danger list since the start. Now—two names will be stricken off the list. The rest will not matter."

"This is what gratitude means to you of Venus, is it?" the laboratory sleuth ground out, stumbling to his feet. "Our world provided you with everything you needed here. You've had the opportunity to study all our sciences. You repay by . . . setting out to conquer us!"

"To the true scientist," Thurlo sneered, "gratitude is but a word. Venus needs your world, the metals and gases you have that we do not. We are justified—but why talk of right and wrong, when we are worlds apart—literally? The point, now, is that you have gone to a great deal of trouble to no avail. For you shall know the same end as those in your city, and in cities to follow."

He turned away, gesturing for the others to bring the prisoners.

They descended a long flight of stairs, the sound of roaring increasing at every landing. Hale was asking himself what it meant when they stopped before a massive door. The door slid into the floor . . . and instantly bedlam rushed out.

The howling of a thousand fiends engulfed them. Wind rushed by them with the force of cannon blasts, seeming to try to drag them through the portal into the vast space beyond.

Hale found himself prodded to the very sill. As fear rushed over him, he saw what it meant. The space he was looking into was in the shape of a great cone, with him standing at the top. The whole interior, down to where pipes and machinery showed dimly two hundred feet below, was a boiling, roaring fog of rushing pink vapor that tore through a hole in the apex.

The scientist guessed it must be thousands of gallons of water being sucked through that hole by a powerful vacuum somewhere above. And now his gaze followed a circular stairway that spiralled down through the depths to the very bottom. His face whitened at the thought of entering that maelstrom.

"Go on!" Rof Thurlo commanded. "You were curious. Now you'll see!"

Hale stepped out onto the narrow catwalk. He closed his eyes for a second, against the fear that leered beneath him, in the depths of the cone. Hesitantly, then, he started down.

A HUNDRED times on that dreadful journey through vapor that he scarcely dared breathe, he thought death was at hand. The iron steps were slippery, the heavy vapor blinding. Arnold Klamper stumbled behind him, several times clutching at his broad shoulders for support.

The Venusians showed no fear of slipping. Their confidence was seemingly inspired by the magnetized soles

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of their metal shoes.

Hale could see now that the stairs led into a room beneath the cone, a great space filled with pipes and pumps. Before he knew it, the entrance was there before him. A blessed door that he dived for, though death waited beyond —and at last he was standing on solid cement, dripping with moisture.

Relief and a feeling of awe kept Hale rooted there while the others crowded through. His gaze whipped about the vaulted glass room.

There was a mighty copper apparatus in the center shaped something like a cream separator, with a six-foot pipe leading into it. Through a funnel-shaped device in the top, vapor rushed with terrific force into the cone. There, on the instant of its exploding into the giant mixing chamber, it was played on by several dozen small streams of pink gas.

A moisture that had nothing to do with the vapor sprang out on John Hale's forehead. This was the source of the Yellow Plague! In this subterranean chamber death and horror were being created!

"Clever!" Arnold Klamper ground out. "As clever as devils — and as cruel!"

Rof Thurlo's mocking voice drew their glances. Among the larger pumps was a gleaming chromium sphere that rested a foot off the floor on a trellis-like arrangement of glass pipes. Thurlo had his hand on one of the valves.

"Bring them here!" he snarled.

He waited until the prisoners were before him. Then he spun the wheel valve. From the nozzle came a spitting sound; without further warning a cloud of red gas, glittering with a million crystals, blossomed from the sphere.

The Venusians began to laugh harshly as the Earthmen disappeared in the poisonous fog. This gas was life to them; to the scientists it was the deadliest of poisons.

Rof Thurlo broke into wild laughter, taunting them with sarcastic gibes. But his humor trailed off as a minute passed and the forms of the victims still showed through the cloud, erect and apparently unharmed. Suddenly he swore.

"The masks! Take off their gas masks!" he screeched.

TWO of the guards sprang ahead. John Hale thrust Klamper behind him. "Back," he uttered swiftly. "We're making our break now. I've got a gun, which they made the mistake of not searching me for."

"Good!" ground out Klamper, the light of hope shining in his eyes, through the lens of his ugly mask. "But do not push me aside. I can fight too!"

Hale peered up through the swirling mist, and picked out the charging guards, coming down the swaying stairway. A crooked grin twisted his face into a smirk of anticipatory action, and he crouched low, leveling his gun steadily.

Then he blasted a shot into each of the Venusians.

Screams of terror lanced through the thunder of the .375. Thurlo shrieked orders as he dragged out his own energy pistol.

A withering blast of energy seared past Hale's head, and vapor sizzled as it struck the floor behind him. Klamper had ducked behind a protective machine. Hastily Hale followed, and breathed a bit easier as Thurlo's energy pistol stopped blasting.

"We've got them deadlocked," Hale muttered. "They can't risk damaging this machinery, and those energy pistols are tough medicine."

He peered out, and saw that the Venusians were trying to gain a vantage

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point above, so that they could rout them from their momentary stronghold. Hale grinned again, and stepping forward rapidly, placed two well-aimed shots in the body of the foremost Venusian. A hoarse scream came from the wounded man, and he plunged in an arc through space from the stairway, squarely into a great revolving wheel. There was a horrible crunching sound, and the groaning of strained machinery for an instant, then the normal roar returned.

"They won't try that again!" said John Hale, returning to his crouch.

"But we've got to get out of here," Klamper protested. "If we stay here, we'll be killed like rats in a trap."

Hale nodded. "We'll make a break for it . . . but say, things are pretty quiet. Wonder what they are up to."

Klamper stood up determinedly. "To no good, you can be sure," he affirmed. "If we are to make a break, it must be now."

Hale stared around. "Create a fuss, somehow," he whispered more to himself. "Then, under cover of the confusion . . ."

Then his eyes fastened on the nitrogen sphere. Hope came over him in a warm wave. The gun leaped in his hand as he emptied the remaining four shells into the tank.

A greater roar than that of the revolver took possession of the room now. Hot gases, rebellious under pressure, tore through the small holes, ripping them instantly into huge gashes. Inside of five seconds the room was solid with the blinding fumes.

Hale's hand found Klamper. "Out!" he hissed. "Our one chance to stop them permanently is outside."

Through a hell of screaming and roaring, they groped to the ladder again. They were halfway up the slippery iron stairs when the crackling of energy bolts electrified the air about them. Up ahead Hale watched a large chunk fly off the spiral stairway. Then the firing stopped and the steps shuddered to the pounding of many feet. Apparently they realized the danger of ruining the stairway and imprisoning themselves in the chamber of death.

SOMEHOW they made the top and drove up the climbing corridor to the outside air. Hale paused only long enough to take a deep breath and glance through the streets. In the mist a long way south he could see one of the gigantic electro-screens.

"This way!" he panted. "We've got to turn that thing off."

Klamper's seamed face was blank with wonder, but he merely shrugged and followed in Hale's wake.

Before they could reach the end of the city, a howling mob had formed behind them. The ground about them leaped and churned with the impact of the deadly force charges. Hale forced a little more effort out of his aching legs. Klamper was almost finished.

The buzzing of the screen was loud as Hale dived around a corner. Then hope buoyed him up with a fierce surge as the little control house loomed before him!

At the base of one of the huge pillars supporting the screen, it squatted in Venusian ugliness. But to Hale it was the most beautiful sight in the world. He pounced on the door and tore it open. Through the portal he shoved the staggering surgeon, to follow him hurriedly.

One swift glance showed him what must be done.

Relays and switches covered one entire wall. He began pulling them out one after the other. Klamper took his cue and began doing the same. Quite suddenly darkness blanketed the room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HALE stepped to the door. His fingers were busy reloading his gun with the few extra shells he had brought along. Outside he saw the same darkness lay over Kador. A gasp caught his throat when he realized the poisonous fog was lifting!

Released from the hold of the electro-screens, it was being swirled off by wind! It was suddenly colder, too. On those two facts Hale was banking all his hopes.

Now the first of the Venusians swept around the nearest building. Hale saw an energy pistol come up. His revolver roared once and brought the man down. The two who followed him stumbled over the body and crashed to the ground. Hale waited for them to rise . . . but they seemed unable to do more than crawl.

Cries sheered the night silence. More and more of the green men came around the building. But they were stumbling and reeling like drunken men. Already the atmosphere of earth was poisoning them!

A few shots blasted into the building, spraying the scientists with cement chips. Hale held his fire, saving his last two shots for those who came too close.

A horde was gathering in the street. But their cries of anger had changed to wails, their powerful limbs now too weak to support them. Crawling, staggering, the mob came on.

Now the front line of men had ceased to move. Others tried to pile over them to reach the control house. It was when Hale began to breathe more easily that Rof Thurlo appeared. He fired once . . . to miss the ruler by feet. Thurlo laughed.

Like an insane man he fought his way through the crowd and spilled into the open space. There he planted his legs wide and swayed drunkenly. In the wild stare of his red eyes Hale read the same thought that was in his mind: That here in this city of death the two of them must settle the fate of a world.

The scientist waited until he was looking into the bore of Rof Thurlo's own weapon before he squeezed the trigger again. A groan slipped past his lips. He had missed! Rof Thurlo came on. Behind him Venusians tumbled to the ground dead. But yet, Rof Thurlo came on, vindictively. Was the Venusian immune to death?

Arnold Klamper breathed softly: "We tried, my friend. Would to God we had succeeded!"

Then suddenly their despair exploded. Rof Thurlo lowered his gun without firing it, groaned softly, and toppled forward!

John Hale and Arnold Klamper stood watching the shambles for a long time, each silent under his own thoughts. Something too big for them to conceive had happened tonight.

All that Hale could realize was that one more spark of life in that sprawled body out there—the mere strength to squeeze a trigger—and greed would soon have written "Finis" to the ageless story of Earth.

BACK ISSUES S-F MAGAZINES

AMAZING & FANTASTIC* (1963-1972), *THRILLING S F, SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES, S F GREATS, STRANGE FANTASY, SPACE ADVENTURES, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES YEARBOOK—1972, THE STRANGEST STORIES EVER TOLD, SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS, WEIRD MYSTERY, SCIENCE FANTASY*—Most issues available *(60¢)* plus 15¢ a copy to cover mailing costs. *ULTIMATE PUB. CO., BOX 7, Flushing, N.Y. 11364.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Academy of Mystic Arts Invites You to:

BECOME A "Witch!"

Now, for the first time ever, you can learn the real teachings *behind* Witchcraft . . . Age-Old Wisdom which gives you greater health, peace of mind and opens the doors to the richer, fuller life you always wanted for yourself and loved ones!

Each lesson comes to you complete with secret instructions enabling you to practice ESP, project your psychic body, develop self-healing and become a MYSTIC MASTER.

Step by step you begin to release the Ancient Mysteries known only to Sages and Magi . . . mysteries which have their origin in the Great White Brotherhood, the Essenes and the Theraputae.

Yes, YOU CAN LEARN the secrets formerly reserved for Coven Initiates easily, quickly . . . within the privacy of your own home.

Freedom From Worry

"I feel more relaxed. I used to worry a lot about my bills I have to pay. But now my worries are leaving. I don't know how to explain this."—J. M., Ohio

Suddenly Gets Job

"My husband got the exact job you worked on for him."—M. W., Arizona

"I like you to know that I got a job the next day after I wrote you."—L. R., Ontario

Amazing Money Miracle

"I feel power that I did not know I possessed. I ran short of money for another car so I sent out 'a Call.' The next day I had money in my shirt, some in my pants pocket and loaned my son-in-law thirty dollars. This may seem trivial to you but to me it is a miracle. You made it all possible."—J. E., Calif.

Relationships Improved

"Boy friend and I are even getting along better than before."—B. S., Okla.

Academy of Mystic Arts, Dept. L-UF7
227 E. 45th St., New York, N. Y. 10017

Respected Archivist:

Please inscribe my name in the Academy and send me the first lesson in Wicca together with a complete description of membership privileges including special assistance by the Council of Elders.

I enclose the sum of $3.99 which I understand will be refunded to me should I not be satisfied in any way.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

"A United Lodge dedicated to the spiritual development of its Affiliates"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SMASHER

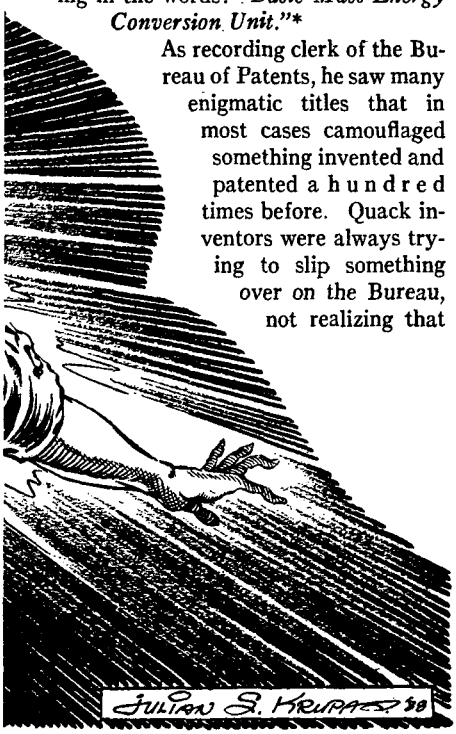
By GORDON A. GILES

John Tarkton invented Atomic Power, then died, a victim of his own creation. To the world he left a potent heritage of unleashed power; to Dr. Henry Lewis a terrific burden of responsibility

CHAPTER 1

An Amazing Invention

MILTON SANDER read the title of the thin sheaf of neatly-clipped typewritten sheets without recognizing any special meaning in the words: *"Basic Mass-Energy Conversion Unit."**



As recording clerk of the Bureau of Patents, he saw many enigmatic titles that in most cases camouflaged something invented and patented a hundred times before. Quack inventors were always trying to slip something over on the Bureau, not realizing that the department had hundreds of well-trained employees for the purpose of preventing duplication of patents, and to weed out utterly worthless mechanisms and devices that worked only in the originator's optimistic mind.

A Patent Bureau clerk's job was supposed to be intriguing, but Sander often found it boring. He yawned and glanced at the clock. Fifteen minutes to go before quitting time.

Each day seemed longer and more tiresome to Sander, as he endlessly recorded patent applications, spurious and otherwise. If only he had enough money to throw up the job and try easy living for a change. Sander was not particularly industrious, but he was ambitious. The stock market appealed to

* The phrase used here is in reference to the rule first formulated by Einstein in 1915. It was a natural deduction from the phenomenon of radio-activity, or the breakdown of certain atoms into simpler atoms *with release of energy*. Such conversion of mass into energy occurred only in nature and man seemed unable to hasten or alter the process.

Since that time, science has sought the means to unlock the vast storehouse of energy bound in matter, and has had some measure of success. Noteworthy among these are the experiments with the cyclotron, or atom-smasher, built by Dr. M. A. Tuve and his colleagues, Drs. N. P. Heydenburg and L. R. Hafstad at Carnegie Institute of Washington, and also experiments by Drs. R. G. Herb, D. W. Kerst, and D. B. Parkinson, of the University of Wisconsin. Even the popular imagination has been fired by this golden dream of unlimited energy and it has been labeled Atomic Power.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him as a game worth while—if he only had money to start the ball rolling.

Disinclined to do any more work, Sander idly began reading the author's notes heading his diagrams and formulae.

"Atomic Power."

Sander chuckled aloud cynically as he read those two words. "So *that's* what he meant by that pretty title! Another crackpot. Perpetual Motion machines used to hold the application record, but I think lately Atomic Power engines have taken first place. When will these poor fish learn you can't get something for nothing?"

He read on, to kill time.

"Theoretically, it is possible to transform matter completely into energy.

"It is with some pride, therefore, that I submit herewith the plans and complete specifications for such a power unit, guaranteed to deliver 500 horsepower from a pound of sand. The energy is released almost entirely as infra-red heat radiation, suitable for steam engines. The efficiency of this unit cannot be increased beyond the point specified because of the danger of explosion."*

Sander chuckled. "500 horsepower from a pound of sand—I'll be blowed! This fellow has imagination—should write stories. Wonder what a handful of common dirt would do. Run a car from here to Halifax, I suppose."

Sander yawned again with one eye on the clock and saw he had five minutes to waste yet. He glanced over the carefully filled out application blank.

"John Tarkton, Ph.D., former Professor of Atomic Physics," mumbled Sander as he read. "22 Vine St., Jamesville, Indiana. Age 48. Unmarried. Retired; private research."

Sander sighed. "Retired. Must have money. And the poor sap putters around in a laboratory, inventing air castles, when he could play the stock market and really do things! Professor Tarkton, you're a nitwit, a—"

His eyes caught a note at the bottom of the application in the "remarks" column. It read: "In the event of my death in the interim, all patent rights are to be turned over to Dr. Henry Lewis, 1480 Grand Ave., Oak Park, Ill."

Sander snorted. "Huh, the man actually *believes* he's got something here, like it was *sure* to be accepted for patent. But then they all do. I'll never forget the day that chap stormed in and threatened to sue the government for turning down his gadget for making gold out of brass. This guy—"

Sander broke off and jumped up with alacrity. Time to go at last. He tossed the sheaf of papers in his "no-rush" basket, for entry sometime the next day. He left, milling out of the building with hundreds of others.

That evening, alone in his room, Sander devoured the stock market reports in his daily newspaper, mentally counting the winnings he had made with non-existent money.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright. His eye fell on an obscure item buried on page 19.

"Jamesville, Indiana. At four P.M. today a gigantic explosion destroyed

---

* The *total* atomic demolition of a gram-mass (of any element) would yield 1,000 horsepower for four years. This quantity of energy almost staggers the imagination. However, science has so far been able to release only infinitesimal amounts of it. Elaborate machinery and energy greater than that extracted is necessary for the process.

An Atomic Power heating unit, with an efficiency of only .0004 would still get ten times more energy from a pound of stone than modern steam-engines get from a pound of coal. Such a unit would be useful for heavy-duty work immediately, and would undoubtedly supplant all other generators of power in a few years. It would automatically reduce by ten times the cost of all power production.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the laboratory-home of John Tarkton, probably from some dangerous experiment. He was known to be in at the time of the catastrophe, but his body was not found due to the violence of the explosion, which left not one stone on another. Fortunately, the nearest house, a block away, suffered no more than shattered windows. His will, in the Main Bank, states that he has no close relatives and leaves his entire estate to Dr. Henry Lewis—"

Sander jumped up and began pacing the room, thinking rapidly. Today he had read the submitted plans for an Atomic Power process, by this man who now lay dead. But more remarkable than the coincidence was the *manner* of his death.

Explosion!

"Lord!" breathed Sander. "That fellow has—had—the real thing. *Atomic Power!*"

Though not a scientist, Sander had enough native intelligence to realize that a workable Atomic Power process was priceless. The paper those formulae and diagrams were written on was worth its weight in radium!

"Just think," mused Sander, "on my desk right now lies a discovery about like radio, or X-rays. It'll sure turn things topsy-turvy in the industrial world, with power produced ten times cheaper than now. Lucky stiff: Dr. Henry Lewis. He gets the patent rights and a mint, right in his lap!"

Envy radiated from Sander's voice. "What I couldn't do with money if I got that break!" He shrugged. "Oh well, maybe I'll win the Irish Sweeps next week."

He turned back to the newspaper, but could not seem to get his mind off that strange coincidence, and its results.

As though he had been stabbed, he suddenly turned pale and began to tremble like a leaf.

Fool! Why hadn't he thought of it before? *No one really knew the plans were on his desk!*

Sander lay awake most of that night, feverishly scheming. Next day, at his desk early, he slipped Tarkton's manuscript into his coat pocket. That night he was again awake, laboriously typing the notes and transcribing the mathematical formulae of the dead scientist's papers.

Sander had made up his mind to play opportunity to the limit. The plans had two possible markets, both as an industrial prodigy and as a military secret, for what could explode once could explode again! He would sell them to the undercover agents who were always ready to pirate useful inventions. Sander saw his chance to play a double game and come out winner twice.

A week later Milton Sander had departed for Europe, three hundred thousand dollars to the good. Among the many courses open to fate in this matter, it had taken one of the strangest. The plans for Tarkton's invention were in the hands of two unscrupulous foreign interests—

CHAPTER II

A Tremendous Responsibility

DR. HENRY LEWIS opened the packet of registered mail in deep wonder, noticing it was from Jamesville, Indiana. In it were three items. The first, a small wooden box that contained something heavy, was marked "Do not open!" The second was a large envelope bulging with papers. Last he picked up a smaller envelope with his name written across it and marked, "Please read this first!"

Though he realized these were from a man who was dead, and who had been his friend, Lewis could not help smiling a little at the eccentric nature displayed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tarkton had always been a secretive, mysterious sort.

The day before Lewis had received a letter from the Main Bank of Janesville, informing him that Tarkton had been killed, and that they were forwarding certain items he had left in their care.

"Damn fool!" Lewis had muttered sorrowfully, after the initial shock was over, "I knew he'd blow himself up some day!"

Now, Lewis gazed down at these last messages from his friend and sighed deeply. They had not seen much of each other in the past ten years, but a lasting bond of friendship forged in college days had never been broken. They had corresponded regularly, Tarkton telling of his researches in subatomic physics, Lewis telling of his academic work.

Picking up the envelope so meticulously marked for his initial attention, Lewis opened it and read the contents. Amazement came into his face with the first few lines and remained rooted there to the end.

Lewis:

You are reading this letter only in the event of my death!

Yes, my death, Lewis, for I cannot stop now and the trail ahead lurks with danger! I have reached a milestone and beyond beckons a vast new field of exploration!

Lewis, my results were crowned with success, breath-taking and sudden, seemingly all at once. Yet I realize it was from the twenty years of effort I put into this task. But that is the way of scientific discovery—through years of trial and error, bitterness and defeat.

Six months ago it came to me, and I realized I had—ATOMIC POWER!

I did not inform you, for you are the rankest of skeptics, though my dearest friend, and would have classed it as wishful-thinking.

At any rate, you'll remember my theory—that the way of disintegrating the atom is to use a resonant gamma-ray frequency to shake it apart, as sonic vibrations will shatter the molecules of gross matter.

I never did put much stock in the theories of the atom-smashing school. They have been taking every subatomic particle they could lay their hands on as artillery to bomb the atoms. But that is like taking the asteroids and shooting them through the solar system at random. The chances of a hit with anything are pitifully small. And they must use more energy to propel their subatomic bombs than is released from the collisions.

Vibration was the true answer. Vibration penetrates everywhere, strikes everything. There can be no misses. Yet twenty years of labor with all conceivable vibrations brought little result.

My obstacle was lack of PURE vibration. The sound wave that shatters a glass is a bell-tone—sweet and unmixed. I had to devise carborundum—silicon carbide—crystal capable of dividing the spectrum of gamma-radiation into infinitely graduated frequencies. Thus I was able to get pure, single "tones" of the gamma-group, and concentrate a great deal of power into them without energy-loss in vagrant harmonics, overtones, and heterodyning cancellations.

I installed this in my vibro-projector and played it on a few grains of monazite sand. After a few shiftings of the frequency, I was rewarded. A puff of heat-energy arose that singed off my eyebrows. I examined the grains spectroscopically and found that the rare-earth metals in them—gadolinium, neodymium, lanthanum, etc.—had vanished! The silicon dioxide base was unaffected.

I made controlled tests with a calorimeter and found most of the energy given off as heat—infra-red radiation. The process is inefficient, no more than .0004, but is still ten times more productive than the burning of an equal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

amount of coal.

All these experiments, readjustments, tests, occupied the last six month. Finally, I drew up a set of blue-prints of the vibro-projector and crystal, recorded the mathematics involved, and prepared to send it in for patent.

Of course, the industrial application of this Atomic Power unit will have to be done with extreme caution. I have salted my papers with frequent warnings and notes to that effect. Undoubtedly there will be some unfortunate disasters in the experimental stage, but the technologists and engineers of industry will eliminate them.

Thus, my duty is done. My duty to civilization in this matter. I can now go on with my researches. There are unnameable powers and energies lurking just beyond my reach. Powers that will truly make man the master of the universe! I will seek them!

Dr. Henry Lewis stopped reading for a moment, shaking his head slowly. Just like the visionary he was, Tarkton must plunge onward into the sea he had newly discovered. He had arranged for the patent of the process as a perfunctory matter, and would probably have sold it for a paltry sum if he had lived.

If he had lived! Lewis bowed his head for a moment. Death so soon after victory! It was ironical that this genius could not have lived to see at least the first fruits of his prodigious efforts. Lewis turned back to the letter.

But the trail ahead, my friend, is an uncertain one. Perhaps I will be destroyed in my search for new, secret powers. Realizing this, I decided to conduct my affairs as though I were already gone. I made a copy of my complete researches so far, and you will find them in the large envelope that accompanies this letter. My will has been duly made out, with you as beneficiary, since I have no relatives closer than cousins whom I have never met. The patent application that I am about to mail to Washington is also to go under your name, if it is my fate to leave this life suddenly.

I have deposited these things with my solicitors, who will conduct these matters if the time comes. Lastly, I am writing this letter which is to be forwarded to you only upon my death.

Yet do not think of this as beneficence, awarded you simply because you are my friend. It is really a great responsibility. I have picked you for your sterling qualities, as the one man I can trust to carry on with this grave affair.

Yes, I repeat—GRAVE!

Atomic Power is something perhaps more far-reaching than dynamite, or the invention of the steam-engine. When the patent of my process comes through, it must be turned over to the world-wide Society for Advancement of Science. They alone must be allowed to distribute its plans, AND CARRY ON ANY FURTHER RESEARCH. The patent must not get into the hands of one industrial concern, or in the hands of one group of any sort, political, financial, or warlike.

I am entrusting you with this mission, Lewis, in the event I am not alive to do so. The patent application data and date of mailing are noted below. Also a duplicate is in the large envelope.

Perhaps it would have been best for Atomic Power to be buried still-born. I debated the pro and con of it with myself and finally decided its benefits should triumph, if only care is taken. The thing that finally decided me in that course was a chance discovery in line with my subatomic researches. It is this—

Lewis read on, still more amazed than at the previous revelations.

The letter ended:

The use of this instrument is left entirely to your judgment. I deeply hope that you will never have to employ it. That is all I have to say. If you are reading this, I am dead. Goodbye, my friend. *(signed) John Tarkton.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Henry Lewis, fifty years old and kindly of nature, held the chair of physics at Oak Park University, in which institution he had taught for twenty years. He had always told his pupils, "The advance of science is like a glacier, slow but decisive. Truly great discoveries are made at long intervals. Do not expect what the romanticists call Atomic Power for another century, if then."

Now, after reading the letter from his old friend, Lewis felt the sensation of shock almost as though he had been through a harrowing experience. He was a practical man and did not believe in optimistic day-dreaming about so matter-of-fact a thing as science. He had scoffed in emphatic fashion, in his letters to Tarkton, about the illusion of unlocking the storehouse of power within matter.

Yet here it was, like a bursting bomb —Atomic Power! And he, Henry Lewis, held within his hand the authority to disperse this great discovery to mankind! Authority—and responsibility!

Lewis almost felt himself aging on the spot. Suddenly his sheltered, staid world seemed dissolving around him. He seemed to hear already the slow grinding of immense world events being started. The frightful, inconceivable energies of the atom to be given to a civilization whose keynote was power—and whose methods of balancing that power were none too gentle. The results were not predictable at all.

Lewis tapped his fingers thoughtfully on the box marked "Do not open!" Finally he picked it up gingerly and looked it in his desk drawer. Then, because he was practical, he took out the thick sheaf of papers in the large envelope, rolled up his sleeves and began checking over the mathematical notes. It might be that Tarkton, overworked, had suffered under hallucination over the whole thing.

Lewis soon saw that there was no bit of illusion to it. The cold, hard, incisive formulae spoke aloud their story to his trained mind. Hours later he was still at it, amazed at the genius displayed. It was two lifetimes of daring research, done by one ingenious intellect.

Lewis was startled to hear the voice of his wife over his shoulder. "Heavens—what complicated looking formulae! What do they represent—the end of the world? It's past midnight—"

CHAPTER III

Atomic Power, Inc.

THE letter from the Patent Bureau said: "No patent application by the title of *Basic Mass-Energy Conversion Unit* has been entered in this office in the past year. We suggest you send a duplicate copy."

Puzzled, Lewis sent the duplicate that Tarkton had provided. It was a month after receiving Tarkton's post-death mission, and Lewis had sent a letter of inquiry, wondering at the delay.

His answer came this time promptly. "A device exactly similar to the one described by you, with the same specifications and formulae, was patented under the title 'Atomic-Power Unit' a week ago. We therefore cannot grant the patent to you."

Lewis clutched at the edge of his desk and read it again with a punch-drunk expression. What did it mean?

"Good God!" he exploded finally. "Someone else stole that patent! Atomic Power is in the hands of some unscrupulous person or group—the very thing Tarkton warned against. I must find out—" He jumped up.

"Where are you going?" his wife asked anxiously.

LICENSED TO GUNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"To Washington!"

"But, dear, your classes—"

"Hang the classes!"

That night a speeding plane was carrying Dr. Henry Lewis, face set grimly, to Washington. A deep sense of foreboding rode with him. He did not know what had happened to upset the normal procedure of events; did not know of the bland-faced youth lounging in a Parisian Cafe, flushed with wine and money. But Lewis did have the feeling that the juggernaut of fate had taken a sharp twist. How much so he was soon to learn.

First of all, upon arrival in Washington, Lewis spent a day making inquiries at the Bureau of Patents, passing from person to person in the attempt to find out what miscarriage there had been with Tarkton's application. No one had seen or heard of it.

The next day he was finally given an audience with a high official, who crisply asked his business.

"My friend sent in an application for patent for the Atomic Power process prior to whomever it was awarded," said Lewis, half angrily. "I demand—"

"Yes, yes, of course!" interposed the official in a sarcastic tone. "Naturally you and your friend invented it first, and have been cheated!" His voice changed, became cold. "My dear sir, do you realize that you're the hundredth crank who has been here claiming to be the original inventor? It's always the same. Whenever a new, revolutionizing process of one sort or another is patented, a thousand people rush forward with their preposterous claims over it."

"I see," said Lewis thoughtfully. He suddenly realized the magnitude of the forces against him.

"You don't look like a crank," went on the official, in more friendly tones. "If you have any proofs of priority, you can contest the case in court."

"Thanks," said Lewis, leaving.

He went to a telegraph office and sent a message to his wife at home. "Will remain here for indefinite stay. Letter follows." Then he went to a well-known law firm and began the wheels of court grinding.

"I must fight this out," he muttered grimly to himself, "if it takes every penny Tarkton left me and every penny of my own!"

A year later, after a succession of court cases, it had taken every penny of his combined funds. The powerful interests behind the man in whose name the patent had been issued lavishly poured thousands into their defense. The man was a puppet behind which reposed a huge, mysterious financial group who had their clutches on something they were not willing to let go.

Lewis finally returned home, defeated. His wife could hardly believe it was her husband, so haggard was his face, so bowed his spirit. He said little. He thought much, as was evidenced by long hours locked in his room.

Headlines were in the newspapers a month later. Headlines that startled the world.

"First Atomic Power Engine! To be put in operation tomorrow, after elaborate dedication ceremonies, at Kinsington Cotton Mills. *Atomic Power Inc.*, a new tycoon of the electrical field, announces that it will produce electricity at one-fifth the present cost. Incredible as it sounds, the 'fuel' with which they will stoke their steam-boilers is sand—common sand!"

Editorials appeared in the newspapers that evening, denouncing it as the greatest hoax, or perhaps publicity stunt, in the history of civilization.

But the headlines the next day screamed: *"Atomic Power Engine Works!* Using only sand, which was

DIGITIZED BY OZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sifted down through the fire-box, a steady heat supply was maintained that easily ran the giant electrical generator at full capacity. An invisible ray sprays over the sifting sand, changing part of its atoms into pure heat energy, according to the officials. What the ray is, no one knows. It is the 'secret' of the process. Visiting engineers were baffled and admitted that the process is ten times as efficient as the use of coal."

Again editorials appeared, denouncing it as the greatest hoax, or perhaps publicity stunt, in the history of the world.

But the headlines of the next day shouted: "Stock market in a turmoil! New Atomic Power process threatens gigantic utilities industry. *Atomic Power Inc.*, with secret plants built during the past year, is already supplying current to large factories."

Now the editorials began hailing the discovery as the greatest boon in mankind's history, and predicting an immediate era of golden prosperity.

But the succeeding headlines groaned: "Industrial fabric of nation faced with collapse! Power companies going bankrupt daily. Wave of suicides among financiers who were made paupers overnight. Is *Atomic Power Inc.*, already looming as the number one industry, doing right by its drastic underselling of power?"

Editorials appeared, praising *Atomic Power Inc.* as the liberator of humanity from economic slavery.

But the headlines later said: "Prices rising steadily. Lists of unemployed grow. Ten killed in riot at the Kinsington Mills. Attempt is made to destroy Atomic Power engines."

"Tarkton foresaw something of this," sighed Dr. Henry Lewis, following the news avidly, "if his discovery were not properly introduced into modern civilization. The Lord only knows where all this will end up. It is harder to stop things like that than start them." He paced his room with a bitter expression. "How did it ever happen in the first place?"

He did not know of Milton Sander. Milton Sander was at that moment holding a gun against his temple, in a shabby room somewhere in Europe. He was penniless. He had played the stock market and was wiped out with millions of others in the stupendous financial crash from across the seas.

He had nothing more to live for. Besides, he somewhat realized that he had been instrumental in the recent course of events. It frightened him also to remember that he had sold a copy of the plans to a certain Oriental power. Milton Sander passed from life, with a bullet in his brain.

Events moved swiftly over the world that had just inherited Atomic Power. *Atomic Power Inc.*, in the next year, inexorably made itself the number one financial giant of the world's industries. The formerly great coal, oil and water-power utilities fought a losing battle—crumbled into history. The new engine quickly spread into Europe and caused the same misadjustments, blunders and riots at first.

CHAPTER IV

Disaster

DR. HENRY LEWIS sat in his home with a secret burning within him. He sat quietly, listening to world news over the radio daily, and reading the newspapers. He had grown haggard in the past two years since the death of Tarkton and the birth of Atomic Power. What would all this lead to? He waited—

As his only means of support, he con-

ARCHIVE TO UNLESS
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tinued teaching at the university, but became so preoccupied that his students learned little. To Lewis it had all become trifling—all except the fate of Atomic Power. At home his wife, with a rare understanding, sat by his side silently, also waiting—

Feeling as though he were a disembodied spirit hovering high over earth and watching its struggles, Lewis began to breathe a little easier. Perhaps all would be well after all. Perhaps Tarkton's fears had been unfounded.

Then—it happened!

But in the most surprising, unexpected way Lewis could have conceived. He first heard the item over the radio, given by a shocked announcer.

"Unconfirmed report that the people in the city of Seattle are dying off at a tremendous rate! This is attributed to the presence of a fleet of aircraft—believed to be Asiatic—which suddenly appeared over the city and began circling it hour after hour. But there is no visible indication that they are causing thousands upon thousands of people to die with their flesh burned away from their bones. Nor have any fires broken out. State militia and the Pacific Navy have been ordered to the scene."

Lewis turned pale, horrified. Flesh burned away from the bones, like with radium! That meant gamma-rays! And gamma-rays meant Atomic Power! Nervously he waited to hear further reports of this mysterious menace.

Three days later the full story was out. The enemy from across the waters was waging an unannounced war of invasion on America. Their aircraft had been equipped with some terrible new weapon that shot out an invisible beam of death. It had little or no effect on inanimate matter, but instantly cooked human flesh away from the bones.

With this weapon, the enemy had in three days achieved an unprecedented coup. In two days of continuous use of their death-ray, they had decimated the entire population of Seattle. And they had sent a fleet of American aircraft, rushing to the defense of the city, to crashing doom.

Now, on the third day, Seattle was already being populated with Orientals. All had apparently been planned to the last detail. A fleet of merchant vessels bearing hundreds of thousands of aliens, had secretly steamed across the Pacific and arrived just after the aircraft had done their work. These Orientals were now calmly cleaning up the city and taking it over, without a dollar's loss in material damage.

Lewis groaned, realizing the diabolical thoroughness of it. Invincible, the lethal fleet would go from city to city, ridding each of its inhabitants. Across the Pacific would come armada after armada of Orientals, to take over the cities. When the American naval fleet elected to interfere, the enemy naval fleet would engage them. Armed with the new weapon, they would be victors, inevitably. In a few months the western coast would be in foreign hands. Then they would creep inward, day after day.

Lewis' shoulders sagged in despair.

Tarkton had been right after all. Every new scientific discovery is turned to warfare sooner or later. All this must have begun at the time two years ago when the patent for the basic Atomic Power unit had slipped out of his hands. The enemy, whose agents must have stolen a copy of the plans, had planned conquest. Instead of concentrating on the invention's industrial uses, they had immediately applied it to the military. They had somehow found the way to release Atomic Power as gamma-radiation rather than heat-radiation, a sim-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ple enough shift in the spectrum scale.*

With this Herculean weapon against which the world had no defense, the enemy could not be stopped. They might well conquer all earth! Or if the defending race also adapted Atomic Power to the gamma range, a truly titantic war would result, and that could not be a lesser evil. Humanity would lose either way—and civilization.

A dark, terrible future faced mankind. *Atomic Power had run wild!*

Lewis, after hours of these thoughts, stood up, eyes burning. "This is the time!" he said so solemnly that his wife shuddered.

He went to his room, unlocked his desk drawer. He took out the box Tarkton had sent him two years before. Carefully Lewis broke the seals and took out the shining, heavy little instrument within. It consisted of a small, thick quartz-glass vacuum tube holding a beautiful crystal of carborundum. The cathode was aimed directly for the glittering crystal. Beside the tube were several intricate coils of insulated copper and an electromagnet.

Lewis set the compact instrument on the table and stared at it wonderingly. Then he picked it up again and strode like a robot to the door of his home. His face was set in grim, twisted lines. His wife, seeing something in his eyes, sobbed brokenly at his shoulder. Lewis kissed her tenderly, left without a word.

It was late at night. He walked to the university, had the nightwatchman let him in, unlocked the door to his private laboratory. He set the instrument on the workbench and attached two heavy cables to its leads. The terminals of the cables at the switch panel, was marked "20,000 volts."

Eyes fixed on the instrument with an unblinking stare, Lewis fumbled in his coat pocket and pulled out Tarkton's last letter. He read again that portion that had been his secret from all the world for two years. Said Tarkton from his grave:

In the box is a small but important instrument. My researches in gamma radiation, with the carborundum crystal, showed me a remarkable thing. There is a certain vibration which, with sufficient power behind it, will shatter every crystal of carborundum in the world! Shatter it into pure radiation—with an explosive effect unparalleled in chemical explosives.

That instrument is set to produce this certain vibration. It is in your hands. If you are faced with a stupendous emergency, in which all the world and civilization are involved, use the instrument, giving it 20,000 volts. It will instantly shatter every carborundum crystal on earth. Every Atomic Power device, based on my unit, will then be rendered useless. It is a perfect checkmate to Atomic Power—if it runs wild!

The explosions of the crystals will of course take many human lives among those within range of their blasts. Therefore, you must not take these lives unless you are thereby sure of saving many more lives in the future!

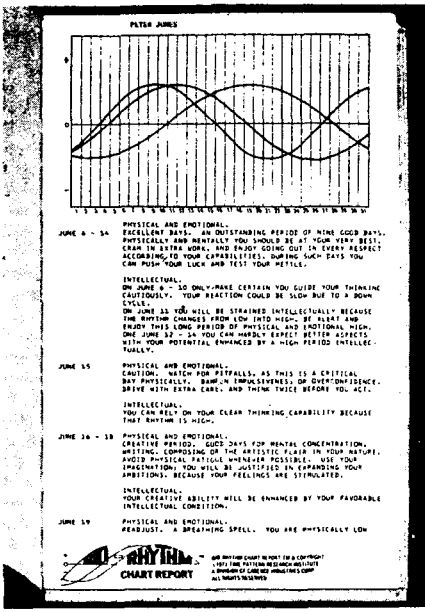
Lewis did not ponder this long. There might be hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives lost through the use of this instrument now. But there would be millions upon millions lost later, and a civilization crushed, if he delayed. It was a Jovian choice, with only one answer.

Face set frozenly with determination, Lewis stepped to the panel and knifed a gleaming switch. Twenty thousand volts of energy sang lustily as they surged along the cables and through the

(Continued on page 101

* The spectrum scale of radiation is a scale of vibratory range adapted from the spectroscopic scale of color, the visible portion of vibration waves. It is assumed that all vibrations are contained in a continually graduating scale, of which color, sound, X-rays, radio waves, cosmic rays, etc., are all specific ranges.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


PLTSE JURES
JUNE 6 - 14
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
EXCELLENT DAYS. AN OUTSTANDING PERIOD OF NINE GOOD DAYS. PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY YOU SHOULD BE AT YOUR VERY BEST. CRAM IN EXTRA WORK, AND ENJOY GOING OUT IN EVERY RESPECT ACCORDING TO YOUR CAPABILITIES. DURING SUCH DAYS YOU CAN PUSH YOUR LUCK AND TEST YOUR METTLE.
INTELLECTUAL.
ON JUNE 6 - 10 ONLY, MAKE CERTAIN YOU GUIDE YOUR THINKING CAUTIOUSLY. YOUR REACTION COULD BE SLOW DUE TO A DOWN CYCLE.
ON JUNE 11 YOU WILL BE STRAINED INTELLECTUALLY BECAUSE THE RHYTHM CHANGES FROM LOW INTO HIGH. BE ALERT AND ENJOY THIS LONG PERIOD OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HIGH. ONE JUNE 12 - 14 YOU CAN HARDLY EXPECT BETTER ASPECTS WITH YOUR POTENTIAL ENHANCED BY A HIGH PERIOD INTELLECTUALLY.
JUNE 15
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
CAUTION. WATCH FOR PITFALLS, AS THIS IS A CRITICAL DAY PHYSICALLY. DANGER IMPULSIVENESS, OR OVERCONFIDENCE. DRIVE WITH EXTRA CARE, AND THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU ACT.
INTELLECTUAL.
YOU CAN RELY ON YOUR CLEAR THINKING CAPABILITY BECAUSE THAT RHYTHM IS HIGH.
JUNE 16 - 18
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
CREATIVE PERIOD. SUCH DAYS FOR MENTAL CONCENTRATION, WRITING, COMPOSING OR THE ARTISTIC FLAIR IN YOUR NATURE. AVOID PHYSICAL FATIGUE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. USE YOUR IMAGINATION. YOU WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN EXPANDING YOUR AMBITIONS, BECAUSE YOUR FEELINGS ARE STIMULATED.
INTELLECTUAL.
YOUR CREATIVE ABILITY WILL BE ENHANCED BY YOUR FAVORABLE INTELLECTUAL CONDITION.
JUNE 19
PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL.
READJUST. A BREATHING SPELL. YOU ARE PHYSICALLY LOW
RHYTHM
CHART REPORT

GOOD DAYS BAD DAYS HIGHS—LOWS

We all have them. Now...know in advance *with a Bio-Rhythm™ Chart-Report™ you can*

USE your high energy days to start important projects

AVOID your off days

BE EXTRA CAREFUL on accident prone and error likely days

You know how often you have felt on some days that you can tackle any problem with ease and enjoy what you are doing. You also know how you have suffered on off days when nothing seems to go right. WELL THESE DAYS CAN BE CHARTED IN ADVANCE.

This is a discovery that has captured the mind of scientists for over 50 years. These researchers have been aware of the cyclical fluctuations in physical energy, the nervous system, moods, emotions and feelings of well being. For years scientists computed charts by hand. Now for the first time available to the public through the computerized technology the IBM/360.

EVERYBODY HAS UPS AND DOWNS

Everybody has cycles – everybody's cycles are different. The capacity to learn and to absorb seems to be highly regulated by INTERNAL LIVING CLOCKS starting the day you are born. These physiological changes are a part of our very bones and flesh. Dr. William Fliess, at one time President of the German Medical Association, published in 1903 THE RHYTHM OF LIFE: FOUNDATIONS OF AN EXACT-BIOLOGY... his discovery of a formula that traced a 23 and 28-day high and low period in man's physical and nervous system based on thousands of case histories. Professor Teltscher of Innsbruck later discovered the 33-day cycle affecting the intellectual capabilities.

Today's Health News in February of 1972 said, "Scientists have found evidence that our biological clocks can be meaningful in medical treatment."

The official Tactical Air Command Magazine "ATTACK" in the March 1972 issue reported in an analysis of accidents that 67% of the pilots involved had two or more Bio-Rhythm™ cycles in the minus portion.

A major chemical company testing the Bio-Rhythm™ cyclical theory in a pilot project covering 2 million man hours resulted in a 40% reduction of accidents in their plants.

Human errors can be reduced Flight Safety Foundation reported in their September/October newsletter concerning this human factor side of accident investigation and causation. A transport company in Japan which operates a fleet of some 700 busses, taxis and a primary railroad has been applying the Bio-Rhythm™ Theory to their operation. The results? As quoted in the Flight Safety Foundation newsletter, "In the first year of application the accident rate decreased by one-third as against a steeply increasing trend in the country as a whole"

BE WISE KNOW YOUR CRITICAL PERIODS

Now for the first time a complete set of charts plus *detailed explanations* for every critical period for every month for the next year is yours. Use the report for a whole year. If you are not completely satisfied that the Bio-Rhythm Chart-Report™ did not help you in your day to day plans, then return the report for a complete refund with no questions asked.

You will also know the exact dates *when* your glorious, golden, good days are waiting for you; days when you'll have that tireless extra energy and mental control over yourself. You will know ahead exactly the days when your creative talents come to the surface, so that you can prepare ahead and buckle down to accomplish and win in what you set out to do.

YOU BENEFIT BECAUSE YOU KNOW IN ADVANCE

Succeed because *you chose* the right day for that important appointment or task... *don't fail* just because you didn't know it would be an off day for you.

Bio-Rhythm Chart-Report™ will trace your good days, your off days, energy days, drag days, accident prone days for every month for a year.

Once Bio-Rhythm Chart-Report™ has helped you, you will never plan again without it.

Bio-Rhythm Chart-Report™. Prepared Under Supervision of World Famous Bio-Rhythm Expert George Thommen Author of "IS THIS YOUR DAY"

1973 Bio-Rhythm Chart-Report.™ & © Time Pattern Research Institute Division of Cadence Industries, Corporation All Rights Reserved.

Bio-Rhythm Chart Report, Dept. L-UF7
227 East 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10017

Please prepare for me a confidential in-depth personal Bio-Rhythm Chart Report which will include my projections for the next 12 months. I enclose $20 plus 75¢ for shipping and handling, plus tax, OR charge to my account. 365 Day money-back guarantee.

Charge my: (check one) ☐ Diners Club ☐ Master Charge ☐ Uni-Card ☐ Carte Blanche ☐ Bank Americard ☐ American Express

Acct. No. _____

Exp. Date _____ *Please print:

☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Date of Birth: Month _____ Date _____ Year _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from page 24)

wondering how near death he might be. That time he longed to go back, and would have gone if he had been able.

The other two times he stood by and watched the lights float down to kiss the earth and slowly rise again. He stood by with his arms folded. Every muscle was tensed but he did not move. He watched the miraculous display of power pass within inches of his strong brown hands. He counted the lights as they wafted past him, his eyes following first the blue and then the red—each extending outward into infinite distance and melting away into nothingness.

After each visit, a sickness came over him—the sort of nostalgic sickness that comes when one has looked forward to a reunion with scores of old friends, and then for some reason does not see them.

What was it, Vincent asked himself during the blue weeks that followed these occasions, that made him pass up his opportunity?

Was it—could it be—the grip of friendship of these Cro-Magnons upon him?

True, he had come to dress and talk like one of them. He attended their ceremonies. If he had not been so young they would have made him a master of the arts of farming and tool-making. Strange to say, his music and his reading had not worn out for them, but rather had made him a popular visitor throughout the tribe. His stories of far-off times and places were food and drink to them.

Before the coming of the autumn, the fourth anniversary of his arrival, he fought the matter out with himself and set his plans definitely.

By this time he knew precisely when to expect the autumn arrival of the time chain. It would come in with the equinox. That had been the case every time he had seen it, beginning with his spring college vacation of four years previous—from which he had leaped instantly into a Cro-Magnon autumn.

He set his plans. He decided in what manner he would dispose of his few possessions. He decided in what hasty, brusque words he would say his final farewells to the Fangler family and his other close friends. He concluded it would be best to wait until the last minute to announce his plans.

One by one he notched off the days of the summer on his crude wooden calendar.

Hunzk came for his reading lessons and took the book back home with him for study. Each new day he would come back with new and disturbing questions. Vincent answered them listlessly.

But Penzi did not come back with Hunzk. Penzi was no longer annoying Vincent with her company. Not since that day that the three of them had walked home together from Vorsto's had Penzi thrown herself in Vincent's path.

Sometimes Vincent saw her. That was inevitable, for good weather and tribal gatherings always went hand in hand.

When Vincent did see her it only strengthened his determination to leave this age and this land as soon as possible.

The reason was that Penzi had become beautiful.

She was seventeen now, and she was a very different person from the little thirteen-year-old raggamuffin who had listened so eagerly to Vincent's fireside stories that first winter. Now Vincent could not look at her without seeing the prettiness of her lips and her round peach-like cheeks and the soft lustrous clouds of dark hair that fell over her shoulders.

Vincent knew instinctively that he must go back to the twentieth century soon or he would never go back.

SOMETIMES he wondered whether Penzi had made her official declaration of whom she would choose to invite her to marriage. He supposed she had, though he had ceased to pry Hunzk for items of family or tribal gossip.

One of the books that Vincent had reread dozens of times included a detailed story of the rise and fall of the Cro-Magnons, and the mystery of their vanishment.

A little patch of clouds drifted out of the eastern horizon and the moon slid stealthily up into the vast dome of blue. The faint sounds of the gurgling river were the only music of the serene night. It was intriguing to stop and think that there were endless ages of time like this—but a throb of action was beating in Vincent's blood.

"I'm the only one who knows that this race is doomed. Whatever their fate is to be, I have the means of escaping it. The way out is mine—no one else's.

"I'd be a fool to invest any more of my life with a race that is headed for a dead end. All the friendship and work and love that I might plant here will be fruitless in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the long run.

"Of course if I'm just living for the pleasure of here and now—with no thought of where this old human race is going—with no *responsibility*—"

Vincent Harrison found himself lost in thought. A change had come over him in the past four years, and suddenly he saw it etched as clearly as the moon against the sky.

Four years ago he had fallen into this age all hot and bothered about returning some library books on time and practicing some maestro's composition and getting some notebooks filled and having some dates that would enhance his prestige in his fraternity.

But four years in a new age, with a few books and tons of quiet thought and hours of talk with men who were groping for the basic elements of civilization—these things had given him an insight and a perspective. . .

A perspective on mankind as a whole—what it was and where it was going. . .

And now here he was lying out under the bright moonlit sky, sleepless, pondering, charging himself with *responsibilities* toward the whole of the human race.

"If the Cro-Magnons are headed for a dead end," he repeated, "I'd better get back to the twentieth century where I belong." He muttered his words aloud. "I'd better get back. . . If nothing else, I owe it to my descendants."

"Talking to yourself?" came a voice out of the darkness.

Vincent looked around to see Hunzk approaching by the river path. "Oh, it's you."

"A bad night to sleep is a good night to talk," said Hunzk. "I have many things I need to talk over with you."

CHAPTER VII

The Time Chain Once More

HUNZK dropped down leisurely and propped his elbows against the warm sand. Vincent stood, arms folded. He was at once on the defensive, an unusual attitude for him in the presence of his closest Cro-Magnon friend.

"Go ahead, Hunzk," he said in a cool, uncommunicative manner. He waited, staring out into the skies, thinking how this same bright night would look from the top of a skyscraper. His fraternity had had a skyscraper party once, and he remembered vividly how he and another fellow and their dates had slipped down to the museum floor and persuaded the guard to let them browse through the relics, even though it was after hours—and how the girls had shrugged at the sight of artifacts from races dead and gone, and begged to be taken back to the moonlit roof garden. . .

"Ponpo," said Hunzk casually, "I am troubled until I cannot sleep."

"Why?"

"Because something is going to happen to my race."

"What?"

"I do not know. Even the men of your century did not know. But whatever it is, it is coming soon."

"Do you see any dangers about you, Hunzk?"

"If I could see the dangers, Ponpo, I would fight them. I would organize this whole valley to fight them. It is not the dangers which can be seen that I fear. It is the dangers that I cannot see. . ."

"Perhaps you are borrowing trouble," said Vincent. He strolled down to the river's edge and bathed his perspiring face and neck. Hunzk followed him.

"It might be war, though we have never had any great fighting among us in recent years. The tribes to the south never do more than threaten. Or it might be disease—"

"Hunzk," Vincent interrupted, "how long have you been thinking these thoughts?"

"Only since Penzi read to me—"

Hunzk put his fingers to his lips and tried to take back his words. Vincent, who had started to scoop up another handful of water, stopped motionless. "Penzi has been *reading?*"

"I have been teaching her, just as you have taught me," said Hunzk guiltily. "But she forbade me to tell you. . ."

Long after that night's conversation, the news about Penzi still thumped through Vincent's arteries. From the first, he had marvelled at the ability of these Cro-Magnons to accept the twentieth century knowledge and outlook. If this fine race had only survived to get the benefits of the manifold developments of the centuries following their disappearance, what a proud race they would have been!

So Penzi, as well as Hunzk, was learning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to read and think on Vincent's level! And Vincent was not supposed to know. It occurred to him that many things may have happened in the Fangler family which he didn't know.

Vincent cut another notch in his wooden calendar. The days were growing shorter. Summer was passing. Soon would come the equinox. . . .

WEEKS later a shrill voice rent the afternoon stillness. "Ponpo! Ponpo! Come quick! Come!"

Vincent thought someone must have been murdered, the way the young son of Fangler was yelling. He leaped from his perch above the cave entrance and bounded down the path toward the frantic child.

"What is it, my boy?"

"Hurry! Penzi wants you!"

"Where is she?"

But the youngster took no more time to answer questions. He led the way down the hillsides with the nimbleness and speed of a hunted rabbit, Vincent following.

The course led straight to Vincent's own shelter. "What would Penzi be doing there?" His whirling thoughts could find no answer.

"Hurry, Ponpo!" That was Penzi's voice. "You can still make it!" She was running beside him. "The time chain . . ."

"And we're going with you, Ponpo!" That shocking announcement boomed forth in Hunzk's big voice. As Vincent rounded his shelter he came upon the party of them —the other two children jumping up and down with excitement, Hunzk and Lindova arm in arm and dressed for travel—and rising above the level of their heads, the gleaming time chain!

"No time to lose!" Hunzk barked. "If that thing will take three of us, Lindova and I are going to risk it. Here, let me lift you, Ponpo! Hold tight around my waist, Lindova—"

Before Vincent could catch his bearings, the strong arms of Hunzk lifted him off his feet and held him high. The little blue and red glowing dots were right before his fingertips.

In that crucial second of time Vincent's old rebellion against leaping out of this age once more surged through him. Even with Hunzk and Lindova going with him, he was being *railroaded* out. He was being packed off. Penzi thrust the saxophone case into his arm.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He caught it under his elbow. Then, on a decisive impulse, his hand seized Penzi by the wrist. His other hand swung at the first of the blue lights.

But the swing took Hunzk slightly off balance—with the result that Vincent's hand struck through a full score of the reddish lights.

The reeling sensation lasted only a split second. It was the sensation of a harmless tumble of the human pyramid—Hunzk Lindova, Vincent and Penzi—plus the saxophone. They all fell to the ground—*different ground.*

Vincent jumped to his feet and whirled on Hunzk.

"What did you do that for?" he asked angrily. "Now there's no telling where we are . . ." he paused to stare around, saw a primitive forest, and no sign of living thing ". . . this isn't 1941, certainly, and that's where we wanted to go. I hit the right light, all right, but you made me hit a whole string of them. We might even be in the world of the insects, 102,000 years in the future."

"I hope so," said Hunzk eagerly. "Then we can fight!"

Penzi looked around, speculation in her bright eyes.

"No, I don't think we are in that age," she remarked. "This looks very much like our own world, back in 25,000 B. C."

Vincent stared at her, then looked around soberly. "Yes, it does, almost," he agreed, "except for one thing . . ." he pointed, "off there, through the trees, I see a building. There were no buildings in your world."

Hunzk uttered a loud cry, and followed by Lindova, he bounded toward the clearing Vincent had indicated.

"Let us go see it!" he shouted.

Vincent bit his lip, and grabbed Penzi's arm.

"Come on," he said. "He is foolish for running blindly ahead. Maybe there are dangers here. If I'm not mistaken, that building is in ruins."

"I saw that, too," Penzi agreed.

"You did?" Vincent looked down at her. "Sharp eyes, haven't you?"

They went after Hunzk and Lindova, soon caught up with them, standing beside the ruined building, staring at it in puzzlement.

"There is no one living here," said Hunzk in a tone of disappointment. "It has fallen down."

"Not *fallen,*" corrected Vincent in perturbed tones. "That building has been very thoroughly wrecked! Almost as if by a . . . war!"

Lindova's brow wrinkled. "A war?"

Vincent nodded. "Yes. That building is only a few years old. The mortar is comparatively new. Even the smashed bricks are not covered with moss. But there's something funny about this building. It isn't modern. It isn't even the kind of a building you'd expect from a future world, past 1941. It's almost a primitive building—such as the Cro-Magnons might have built, had they surviv . . ." Vincent halted [illegible]tly.

Hunzk looked at him. "You might as well have said it, Vincent. I have been thinking it too. Our race vanished. Maybe it was destroyed—by something." His big fists clenched. "Maybe it was the insect world that destroyed it!"

Vincent snorted. "Now you are letting your imagination run away with you. The insect world is supposed to be 102,000 A. D. The Cro-Magnons disappeared long before my own time, 1941. Maybe 15,000 or 20,000 years before . . ."

"Maybe the insect world *wasn't* 102,000 years in the future," pointed out Penzi suddenly. "Xandibaum wasn't sure, in his book. Maybe he didn't *know* for sure. Maybe this world we are in now is the insect world, and maybe it *is* between our two times, Cro-Magnon and 1941."

Vincent snorted again. But he was disturbed. This little Cro-Magnon miss was as sharp as a razor. Maybe she was wrong, but she wasn't as uncertain as anyone else in this confounded mess. What if she were right . . .

"This is dangerous, standing here," he said abruptly, glancing nervously about. "If this *is* the world of the trapdoor spider . . ." he shuddered.*

"Perhaps some of the people are still alive," said Penzi. "Maybe we can find them."

"Maybe there are no people," Vincent

*The trapdoor spider is the strangest of the spider family. As a general rule, they live alone, except for mating time. They build underground homes, with an entrance on the ground, sealed by a hinged trapdoor. They lie in wait behind the door, and when an unwary insect comes near, pop out and drag the victim down to a certain and horrible death.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reminded. "After all, we don't know for sure which age we really are in."

"If this is an age between ours," she said stubbornly, "there should at least be *pithecanthropus*." Penzi had learned her lessons well. Vincent looked at her with ill-concealed amazement.

From that time forward, he discovered, Penzi was going to amaze him frequently. None of the things he had taught Hunzk out of the books had gone to Hunzk alone. They had been passed around.

"We'll have to look out for wild animals, and avalanches, and poison foods. . . . We'll do well to stay close together until we're sure of our ground. It's six months until another equinox," Vincent advised.

"We'll stick together," said Hunzk, and it was plain that any two people as devoted as he and the beautiful Lindova would not stray far apart.

"We'll stick," repeated Lindova.

"In union there is strength, as one of your great men said," Penzi quoted, winning another look from Vincent.

"And we'll keep our eyes open for our human ancestors. Sooner or later we'll find them. Maybe," Vincent was not too confident, "we can convince them we've got a lot in common."

IT WAS gratifying to Vincent to see that Lindova and Hunzk were not greatly disappointed over missing their expected trip to the twentieth century. They were, in fact, very much excited over what they found here—and daily there were new, thrilling discoveries. New ruins, the remains of a road built of red stones, and once an encounter with a sabre-toothed tiger.

"That makes *me* right!" Penzi had proudly observed after Hunzk had killed it with a poisoned spear. "This *is* 20,000 B. C."

But Hunzk and Lindova were captivated by the thought that the time chain would come back, and they were confident —even more so than Vincent—that there could be endless additional travel into different ages, so long as they didn't let that time mechanism get out of their grasp.

"They've got an outlook on this time business," Vincent thought to himself, "that's ahead of mine. Here I've been trying to locate in some age where I can live in comfort. They've got a hungering to take a look at life all down through the centuries . . . ."

Vincent shuddered a little. He certainly didn't feel comfortable here.

And yet look at Lindova and Hunzk, cuddled up in a corner like two turtledoves, browsing through history books, chattering about how some day they'd go and see if those things really happened—if they could get Vincent to go with them.

"I'll go, too," Penzi put in, never taking her eyes off the fire where she was roasting a delicious young hedgehog," if I get to ride the time chain to 1941 A. D., and live with those future people, I guess I'll be as modern as anybody."

"Has anyone ever said you weren't modern?" Vincent asked carelessly.

"No one had to *say* it," Penzi answered. She swallowed a blob in her throat and turned her face away from Vincent.

He sauntered close to the fire where she was working, caught her bare arms, drew her back a little. She tossed her head back and looked up at him, and her soft hair fell against his hands.

"You're working too close to the fire, Penzi," he said softly. "Your cheeks are warm."

"From being slapped," she answered, "three years ago."

And then she was in tears—tears that Vincent could only partly understand, being a mere twentieth century man. But he had a general idea what to do about tears from the eyes of a gorgeously beautiful girl. He and Penzi walked out along the mountainside trail they had marked, and he kissed her for the first time—and the second and the third—and time stood still.

Nobody seemed to mind that the delicious young hedgehog roasted to cinders that evening.

BUT everybody minded a few days later when an earth tremor fairly buried them all under a minor landslide and they had to dig their way out from under the protecting cliff and gather up their possessions and make a new camp up on top. They were still on the site of the time chain, and there they would stay at all costs. For they were already making big plans and counting the days until this six months should pass.

An upsurge in excitement came when they caught their first sight of some fellow human-beings.

But they weren't human beings after all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They were apes. And they were very shy. Neither Vincent or Hunzk could get near then, but Hunzk had a peculiar look in his eye.

"They are much like the apes of the Cro-Magnon age," he said. "But I heard some of them talking, and I almost swear I could understand a word or two here and there. If only I could get closer . . ."

"If you could, they'd probably kill you," said Vincent. "Better keep away. A sabre-tooth tiger is strong on the ground, but an ape is strong in the trees also. They could pounce down on you before you'd know it. And from what I've seen of these fellows, they are crafty. They might lie in wait above your head . . ."

Hunzk grinned. "Let one of them jump me," he boasted. "He will find he has landed into the middle of a real fight!"

Lindova smiled up at him, but there was a nervous look in her eyes. "You are brave, my husband, but please don't look for trouble. I wouldn't want to lose you."

"Smart girl," observed Vincent.

They saw the apes several times in the following weeks. And Vincent always found Hunzk looking at them with a strange gleam in his eyes. And Hunzk spent a great deal of his time working. He was brewing poison for his spear tips, and making new spears.

"When you stop to think of it," Hunzk observed profoundly one day, "this whole business of how fast we develop is the most fascinating puzzle in the world."

"Listen!" Lindova said, smiling proudly. "Hunzk is about to give us a lecture."

"On *modern* man," Penzi put in, never missing a chance to use that word *modern* within Vincent's hearing. There was no longer any doubt with Vincent that they were all modern, comparatively speaking, in thoughts as well as physique.

"Here's the point," said Hunzk, and he wasn't referring to the newly trimmed spear, whose point he was tipping with poison from the fangs of a dead snake. "Those ape creatures out there in the forest are floundering in their struggle. What they do with their *time*—today, tomorrow, next year—can make all the difference in the world in how far their race gets. Every victory over a tiger or a wolf or a deer puts them ahead. But if they could only start working with tools, they'd go thousands of years ahead in one jump."

"That's easy for us to see," Vincent smiled, "because we have the advantage of a later viewpoint."

"Will future men say things like that about us moderns?" Penzi asked. Vincent watched the firelight burn in her wistful eyes. He wondered how she would look in a twentieth century dress.

"If we knew what future men would say about us," Hunzk went on, "what would we do, Ponpo?"

"What would we do?" Vincent repeated absent-mindedly. His eyes and his thoughts were on Penzi, and the direct question was disturbing to his romantic reverie . . .

A few days later Hunzk brought up the same question more pointedly. "If we had future men's perspective on us, would we see that we were wasting our opportunities, the same as those apes. Are we making the most of our tools—our *time chain,* for example?"

The question struck home to Vincent. "We've got all the time there is in the world, Hunzk. What do you think you ought to do with it?"

Hunzk considered. There were lots of immediate things that could be done, as soon as they got back to the Cro-Magnon age. Hunzk's father needed care. The cave needed to be cleaned and re-provisioned for the winter. There was much that Hunzk owed to the home . . .

But there was his own and Lindova's needs to consider. It seemed to Hunzk a larger purpose, as far as his tribe was concerned, for him to provide a cave for Lindova where she could have babies.

"And yet there may be still more important courses of action," Hunzk reflected gravely. "If there is some danger approaching all of my people . . ."

FOR the first time Vincent and Hunzk talked this matter over frankly. Lindova and Penzi joined them. They talked of traveling over the Cro-Magnon valleys to hunt for hidden perils. They would visit the hostile Cro-Magnon tribes to the south. They would scour the country, and if they could foresee what threatened, they would prophesy—

Again Vincent felt the shock of futility. If the scientists of the twentieth century knew that something *did* erase great numbers of Cro-Magnons—

"Then let us leap to the *hundred-and-twentieth century,*" Hunzk suggested. "Per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

haps they will know *what* erased us, and we can take measures—"

"But if it *did* happen," Vincent protested. It was an *if* that brought back the silence of futility. The four of them gazed into their campfire for a time, and when the talk picked up it was of things near at hand—the calendar that promised the return of the time chain, Hunzk's supply of poison-tipped spears, Lindova's souvenirs of this lost age that she wished to take back, and Penzi's new dress.

The new dress was Penzi's spare-time activity. Vincent had taken the materials from his saxophone outfit and made a gift of them to her. He had stripped every square inch of the blue velvet lining of the case, adding to it the wide blue velvet scarf in which he wrapped the instrument. Saxophone springs had been easily converted into needles; pads and keys were available for ornaments.

It was a handsome gift—a twentieth century dress for a very modern girl. Vincent wished he could have told Maestro Galancho to what good use his sax and case had been put.

With that gift went a new understanding—and a promise from Penzi to Vincent. When they got back to the Cro-Magnon age they would be married . . .

Hunzk was keeping watch for the time chain through the night when the answer to his problem burst through like a light. The others were sleeping, or trying to. But with Hunzk pacing about and talking to himself, they waked up to see what it was all about.

"It about making the most of our time," Hunzk was pounding his fists together. "I think I've got it."

Vincent sat up and stared blankly. He saw that Penzi and Lindova were instantly alert. This matter might be abstract to a twentieth century man with comfortable living dumped in his lap, but to these Cro-Magnons, facing extinction—

"Perhaps *we* are a lost cause!" said Hunzk grimly. "What these book writers of Ponpo's age know seems to prove it. But after all, is that the biggest problem?"

"What *is* the biggest problem?" Vincent asked groggily.

"The extinction that comes later—to *all* men—when the insects grow big and take command!" Hunzk paused, knowing that Vincent was likely to snort at this. Hunzk wasn't in the least disturbed by those snorts. "You don't think there will be any changes after twentieth century, Ponpo. Why don't you have the same faith in Xandibaum's spider book that I have in your skyscrapers and airplanes and radios?"

"I have seen airplanes and radios," Vincent answered stubbornly.

"I have not—but they sound logical after I have studied all the magic changes. But no more logical than the huge spiders and grasshoppers which Xandibaum's book describes."

"It's different," Vincent retorted. "That spider stuff was published in the twentieth century. It's bound to be guesswork. If I thought there was a grain of truth in it, of course we'd load up with weapons and get on the time chain and see—"

And so the punch in Hunzk's big wonderful idea—and with it the hope of making their time count for the utmost—seemed lost. And none of them would think of trying the long jump into the future against Vincent's better judgment. Vincent's judgment was their law.

And at any rate they would take the next six months or year in the age of the Cro-Magnon—in the interests of married life.

Vincent's judgment was their law, and it was usually good. But the very next day his dogmatic verdict that the monster spiders of the future were just so much nonsense got knocked topsy-turvy. And the whole argument that Hunzk had been advancing took on new light.

Penzi, having ventued a short distance out of the forest, came screaming back. "A spider! A giant spider! *And it's coming this way!*"

CHAPTER VIII

"Once This as a City"

R. O. XANDIBAUM laid down his paint brush at the sound of the buzzer. He stole a hasty glance at his watch. Nine a.m. The Trapdoor Monsters were right on the dot again this morning. In his eight years of captivity he had never known them to vary as much as five seconds in their Monday morning roll call.

Xandibaum hurriedly jumped into his shell, strapped it on snugly, switched on the silent motors. He applied pressure to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the rheostat switches by moving his knees apart. The spider legs of his mechanized shell went into action. He swiftly ascended to the top of his cylindrical home. Hard against the closed lid, which always reminded him of a solid locomotive drive-wheel fitted into the top of a cistern, he waited.

The buzzer sounded.

Xandibaum touched the switch that elevated the trapdoor. It swung up with a hard jerk and held there. He pushed his shell-clad body halfway outdoors.

Simultaneously five thousand other trapdoors flew open and five thousand Trapdoor Monsters swung halfway into view.

The five thousand monster spiders that occupied this open plaza and similar groups living in other plazas were the most precise and orderly society of animals that ever lived, in Xandibaum's opinion. He knew exactly what to expect from them from day to day.

As long as he could continue in his disguise, and could fulfill the simple responsibilities that fell to him, he might live on indefinitely.

The instant he should fail in any way, and they should discover him, death would be certain—and probably *quick*. Only a few of the most highly developed of the monsters had allowed themselves the luxury of playing with their human victims, during these recent final years of man, before killing them and adding them to the food storage rooms.

Now, from the arched doorway which was all that remained of a once stately building, one of these more high developed Trapdoor Monsters stood viewing the vast semicircle of open trapdoors. That arched doorway had been built by man, to man's dimensions. The monster fitted into it neatly, his legs resting against the sidewalls, two of them up in the curve of the arch.

A picture of ruins! After eight years of imprisonment here, following his years of study that had given the twentieth century a book on this tragic era, Xandibaum still felt the same pang when he looked out across the five thousand half-open trapdoors, coated with debris, to the monstrous form that occupied one of man's last doorways.

True, there was one building, half a mile beyond, that was still standing in all the stately elegance of its advanced Cro-Magnon architecture. It was beautiful and inviting—and sure death.

There was that much left in each of the new, young, Cro-Magnon cities. One inviting building! That had been the monsters' cunning scheme for bringing in every last human being.

An amplified voice from Six-six-six, the monster spider that occupied the commanding position within the battered doorway, sputtered and clacked and chirped.

XANDIBAUM listened tensely. The language was an elusive thing. As far as numerical expressions were concerned, Xandibaum was sure of himself. He knew his own number—the number he had assumed after he had succeeded in killing his predecessor.

He also understood, from the speaker's mood and the listeners' responses, whether work, or food, or orders for the domesticated monster grasshoppers, or training of the young in the arts of treachery and cunning were being talked about.

But after all these years he still could not actually identify *words* that he could translate as such. So much of their communication was based upon their highly evolved instincts—which could be awakened in them by tones of voice and vibrations of legs and bodies—that he missed the subtleties.

Fortunately for Xandibaum, the Trapdoor Monsters had clung to their instinct to live separately, later to be passed on to their descendants, the *trapdoor spiders*. Xandibaum's cylindrical hole in the earth, together with all the chambers and connecting tunnels he had added for his own scientific and clandestine needs, was his own domain.

Only at moments like these, when all the community was called up for the regular roll-call, was he in danger of being scrutinized too closely by his next door neighbors.

Or, considerably more perilous, if he was thrown into the society of some of the monsters on a work shift, and lacked the motor controls of his fake shell to *get by* their critical inspection, he was sometimes forced to resort to emergency measures. In a few such instances he had managed to commit instantaneous, silent murders of the monsters who otherwise would have reported their suspicions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Xandibaum's devices for instantaneous, silent murders were the last word in man's thousand of years of death-dealing inventions. Trapdoor Monster's proficiency at post mortems was slight. The Trapdoor Monster was no scientist.

No, he was simply an imitator and an adaptor. His only inventions ran to trickery, and his wits ran to numbers and rapid calculations. He had taken over many of man's facilities that he could not understand, or repair, much less improve upon.

This amplified chirping that Xandibaum now listened to, coming from the doorway where Six-six-six stood beside a microphone, was simply a steal from vanquished Cro-Magnon man. If these communication systems ever got any overhauling it was done by the monsters' highly developed arts of imitation, thought Xandibaum, not by any intelligent understanding of—

That was his number!

Yes, Xandibaum's number had been called!

The announcement was repeated. . . . It was an order for a duty. . . . Guard duty . . . Tomorrow, on the northern boundary. . . .

There was more to the order, though Xandibaum was far from clear on all that was said. He was sure the guard duty would last several days, perhaps weeks. He thought that he was commanded to have shed his old season's shell and appear in his fresh one for this job.

Five thousand monster spiders slipped out of sight—a few of them having dumped their cast-off shells outside their trapdoors—and five thousand heavy trapdoors clicked shut. Assembly was over for today.

XANDIBAUM slipped back to this living quarters, disposed of his shell. He wrote a few lines in his diary, then picked up his paint brush and worked furiously on the new shell he would don for tomorrow's job.

All of that inner mechanism would have to be transferred, but that would be a quick job. The fastenings for that job had been fixed weeks ago.

And he must remember to load up with plenty of death bolts.

A curious game, he smiled to himself—this business of being the only man on earth! One of these days they would get him; his game was certain to end eventually.

But Xandibaum still had his own personal zest for living; and if another murder or so was the price of a few more days of life, he was good for it!

While the dark paint dried on his fresh spider shell he returned to his diary and wrote:

"Once more I am to expose myself, in disguise, of course, to these creatures in whose midst I am a hidden prisoner. This *may* be my last entry (as I have often written before). I write, knowing full well that there is no man alive to read it. I can conceive of only one possibility by which any man might find his way to this place; namely, by means of the time chain which escaped from me (through my error) to return to a future century.

"If any man should come upon this underground refuge, that man is welcome to what he finds here. The chemical processes for manufacturing food and clothing are his to use. He will do well to keep to the protection of this cave, for the deadly Trapdoor Monsters hold sway throughout the land.

It is strange that once I wrote a book, ascribing this era to the future, to 102,000 A. D. But I had miscalculated, struck the wrong light in the time chain, and it took many trips to discover my error and to return here. When I finally discovered this insect era was in 20,000 B. C., and that the civilization destroyed was that of Cro-Magnon man, after 5,000 years of amazing progress, two great mysteries were solved for me; the answer to the Cro-Magnon enigma—they were destroyed by the trapdoor monsters—and the mystery of the future of man himself. Now I have no hope to correct the error I made in 1940, when I published my book on the FUTURE of man. It is really not the future, but the PAST!

"Once this was a city—a city that extended both above the ground and beneath, and was vibrant with the warmth of Cro-Magnon life. But Cro-Magnon man's wars that drove him underground made him the victim, first to his own shortsightedness, next to the mercilessness of the deadly insects that thrived in these underground habitats, and multiplied, and organized and killed.

"Once this was a city. Now it is desolation and death."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER IX

Death Beneath the Trapdoor

WHEN Penzi came screaming, "A spider . . . *following me!*" Hunzk and Vincent leaped to their feet. Hunzk grasped his poisoned spear in his hand.

"Where?" gasped Vincent.

Penzi flung herself into his arms. "In the clearing . . ." she sobbed. Then she turned and stared back in the direction she had come, and pointed.

But she had no need to point, for there, advancing beneath the trees, was a monster spider, its horrible legs clacking along with almost mechanical jerkiness, its horrid, half-human head turning questioningly about as it came.

It clattered up to within ten yards of them, then stopped. It stood there, eyeing them. Hunzk lifted his spear threateningly, and aimed. The muscles of his great arm tensed. Then, suddenly, the spider spoke.

"Hold it! Don't throw that thing at me. I'm your friend."

Stunned, Hunzk dropped his spear arm to his side.

Lindova uttered a little cry, and Hunzk once more flashed his spear up.

"Wait!" cried Vincent, recovering from his astonishment. "That spider talked to me in my own language!"

"It is magic," growled Hunzk. "I will kill. This thing is our enemy; it is the insect that destroyed my people. . . ."

"No, wait," commanded Vincent, laying hand on Hunzk's arm. "Let me ask it a few questions first. It doesn't seem to intend to harm us—just yet anyway."

He faced the monster insect.

"Who are you?" he asked, feeling rather foolish. It was obvious this thing was a spider, and could not possibly have spoken.

And yet, there came an answer.

"You speak English too! Then you are from my own time! I am your friend. . . ."

Suddenly into the forest came two more of the giant spiders, and the spider who faced them half whirled around.

"Trust me," it hissed. "These are enemies. Make no move. Simply fall in in front of me, and go as I direct you."

Vincent hesitated, and Hunzk bristled, although he could understand no word of what the spider was saying.

"Quick!" hissed the spider. "Before it is too late. I will make believe I have captured you and are returning you to Six-six-six."

Abruptly Vincent decided. "We will walk before him, as though we were prisoners," he shot at Hunzk. "You keep your spear ready, for the first treacherous move."

Hunzk snarled. "Why not kill now, before those other two get here. We will be helpless. . . ."

But it was too late now. The other two spiders clattered up. Suddenly, as though frozen, they stopped. They seemed lifeless.

Vincent was puzzled. But he said nothing as the spider who talked English led them away. For perhaps half an hour they walked along, in silence, and finally they drew up beside a sandy bank. The spider advanced, and a trapdoor opened.

"Go down there," whispered the spider. "And stay hidden until I come back. You will find food, and you will find weapons. Make no moves, because there are five thousand other trapdoors about here, all with spiders either in them, or returning to them. My notes will tell you what this is all about. Read them."

Wonderingly, as he allowed himself to be herded into the trapdoor, Vincent stared at the giant insect.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Name's Xandibaum," snapped the spider. "Now get in there. I can't stay another minute."

The trapdoor snapped shut.

And Vincent, his mind reeling, led the way into the depths of the spider's home.

"SO they went back to caves," Hunzk muttered in his quaint Cro-Magnon words, surveying the place. "It doesn't look quite so inviting as the homey caves of five thousand years ago."

"Keep your spears ready until we've explored," Vincent warned, still dazed at what he had heard.

"I'm scared," said Penzi, following close beside him. She managed to laugh as she said it, but her nervousness was evident. The shock of coming into this new age, to find themselves at once confronted by a huge spidery monster approaching them—speaking to them—in a language that Vincent evidently understood, was all very unnerving.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then to be ordered about, the moment those other two spiders came up, as if the human-speaking spider had suddenly turned cold and hateful—what could one make of that?

"He changed his attitude *because* those other monsters came up," Vincent declared. "It was his only way to save face. He pretended to them that he was leading us to the authorities."

"Then we are in danger?" Lindova asked, being very calm about it all.

"Extreme danger," Vincent answered, and went on with his search through the artificially lighted chambers, the others staying close by him.

"Maybe *he* was our friend," Hunzk was not altogether convinced, having been mystified and confused by the monster's conversation. "But those other two—they will tell the authorities."

"No. You saw them go motionless where they stood? They were dead. The first one killed them with mysterious death-bolts. He is not a spider, he is a man in disguise. He told me. He is Xandibaum."

"Xandibaum!" exclaimed Hunzk.

Penzi gave a little cry and drew back at the sight of three or four huge spidery shells heaped in a corner. Material for Xandibaum's disguises and perfectly harmless, but spine-chilling.

"I'm not going to be frightened," Lindova said staunchly, trying to bolster Penzi's courage. "I've Hunzk to protect me, and you've Ponpo. We should know by now that our men can always protect us."

"We can do it," said Hunzk.

"The dangers here may be greater than we expected," was Lindova's soft-spoken reply. "But even if death were in our path, there is no place we would rather be than at the side of our men when they need us."

An hour later Lindova was dead.

IT all happened so quickly that no one was sure how it happened.

No one had heard the trapdoor open. Everyone had been browsing about through the curious equipment of Xandibaum's underground world. They had paused over the open diary. Vincent had started to read aloud. The written words had quickened the sense of danger.

Hunzk, Vincent remembered, was the first to turn, and the sudden whiteness that came into his face was a forerunner of death itself.

Vincent whirled at almost the same moment. He saw the two monsters approaching. One of them was upon Lindova before anything could be done. Its fangs struck the back of her neck.

Hunzk's spear lashed out—then Vincent's. Poison-tipped spears they were. The two Trapdoor Monsters fell with a crunching sound against the composition floor.

And Lindova sank into Hunzk's arms, her expression not one of pain but of bewilderment, as if to say, "What is this strange thing that has happened to me?" She died without knowing. . . .

They found ways to reinforce locks on the trapdoor, by which these intruders had entered. It was difficult to know just how powerful these gigantic spiders might be. Vincent knew that the tiny trapdoor spiders of his own twentieth century could counteract a pull of ten pounds upon the cork-like entrances to their homes. He knew from his study of Xandibaum's notes that the larger specimens became terrifically powerful, and he had no doubt that these two intruders had lifted door, casing and all.

Even after Vincent discovered the heavy emergency metal doors a little ways down from the entrance, he was careful never to leave the cylinder unguarded. Either he or Hunzk stood by constantly with poison-tipped spears.

They were sure that before long other monster visitors would come in search of the missing two.

And if that talking spider was indeed Xandibaum in disguise, and he had in reality killed two monsters to protect them, he might be coming here soon to hide. Evidently he was very clever. If he could get away with murder on a small scale, perhaps—

But no, at best they were only four against thousands and perhaps millions of monster spiders. Man was a thing of the past. They had proved Hunzk's worst fear—at what a cost!

They cremated the two dead monsters.

They also thought it best to dispose of Lindova's body in such a way that no insect monster could ever disturb it—and they did so with the gentleness and tenderness that was Hunzk's—his heritage from an age in which the love of a man for his mate had attained its first blush of sacredness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEY discovered the periscope.

They found that they could look out on the barren crumbs of disintegrated skyscrapers. They could see the strange comings and goings of the Spiders' domesticated grasshoppers. They saw these big bright yellow creatures flap down out of the skies to deposit food on the ground.

And then, to their amazement, they saw trapdoors fly open here and there. In the flash of a second's time a door would open, the monster spider would leap halfway out to grab the food and leap back again, and the door would go shut.

Except for this intermittent activity, the landscape in the periscope was only a barren open plaza of finely ground debris. All signs of the trapdoors and the life beneath them were completely disguised.

"But there is one building," Penzi said, "away to the left, toward those wooded hills."

Vincent and Hunzk located it through the periscope, and Vincent considered in silence. In his day a building such as that would have been a sure refuge from any storm but war. Obviously it was not safe to stay *here* a minute longer than daylight necessitated. As soon as night fell they would go.

Vincent mentally chartered the course. Hunzk and Penzi got their luggage gathered up for quick moving.

A shadow fell over the periscope.

Vincent looked out to see the cocky purplish eye of a huge grasshopper. The animal stood as if in obedience to some command that had stationed it here.

On either side of the grasshopper hung a sign and both signs carried the same hand-printed message:

"I'll return to you at midnight. Be ready to move.—X."

The grasshopper paced about impatiently for an hour. It nibbled at the stones, pried around over the barren ground in a fruitless effort to find something to eat, finally kicked the paper signs off its sides and masticated them.

CHAPTER X

Flight by Grasshopper

IT WAS a hard decision to make. Vincent knew, without asking, what Hunzk and Penzi thought. They believed that this speaking spider was a cunning creature that had led them straight to a pitfall. He had faked a murder of the other two spider guards to give them confidence.

Then he had conducted them to this place to make prisoners of them.

Finally, he had delegated two spiders to rush in and take care of them. It was almost miraculous that all four of them had not been killed.

Vincent himself was wavering in his faith in this creature who had said, "I am Xandibaum. Trust me. Don't mind my disguise. . . ."

Were those words simply the imitations of man's speech? Every writing of Xandibaum, from the spider book to the diary, had stressed the spider's cunning at imitation.

But there was one thing that made Vincent hold fast to his determination to stay till midnight: The last entry in the Xandibaum diary had been made recently. And it was dated only two days before the equinox.

"Xandibaum is alive unless he's died in the last two days," Vincent declared. "We've come here for facts, Hunzk. He's the man who can give them to us."

"We'll wait if that is your wish," said Hunzk.

"We'll wait," echoed Penzi, folding Vincent's arms, around her. Poor little Penzi was scared to death, but she was trying with all her might to take on the wonderful courage Lindova had shown.

"We'd better pack as many of Xandibaum's things as we can," said Vincent. "If I read the signs right *he's* got to move too."

At midnight they let the creature in, locking the trapdoors securely behind it. They kept their spears ready. But it spoke, as before, in a warm confidence-restoring voice. And in a moment the inner man stepped out of the shell to give them a friendly, if hasty, greeting.

"As I told you, I am Xandibaum of the twentieth century . . ."

While the man talked swiftly to Vincent, the two Cro-Magnons studied him. Penzi gave Hunzk a nudge. There was something she remembered—something that Lindova's father had said about the strange man who left the copper plate—

"This is the one Vorsto described," she whispered. "See the dark blotch on the left check, the sharp face, the long pointed nose—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now there was a tension in the talk between Vincent and this elderly, keen-faced old man, and the listeners tried to break in on Vincent for an interpretation.

"He's just learned that inspection of homes has begun," Vincent explained, "and that two monsters will come here—" He broke off, returned to his English, "Two monsters *have* come, Mr. Xandibaum."

The scientist went white. "I had no way of knowing such a thing would happen—What did they—How did you escape with—" His broken questions clogged against his tightened lips. "There were *four* of you. *Where*—"

Vincent's eyelids lowered. Hunzk and Penzi understood what tragic news was passing between these men. Hurried words of explanation from Vincent quickened the elderly man's determination to action. He paused to place an arm across Hunzk's muscular bare shoulders and utter some sympathetic words that Hunzk could not misunderstand.

Then, lifting them out of their sorrow with a quick smile, he beamed on Penzi and touched the blue velvet dress she was wearing.

"You're the prettiest thing alive, my child. Womankind could not ask for a more beautiful final representative."

Vincent interpreted his speech to her later as they were hiking along through the darkness.

THEY had strapped their luggage on the back of a huge grasshopper, an obedient old beast that Xandibaum talked to like an intelligent horse. It clattered off ahead of them through the black sky. Now and then they would overtake it, Xandibaum would wake it up and give it another direction for the next leg of the journey.

They avoided the forests as much as possible. The forests were sure to hold numerous Trapdoor Monsters that had not taken to the rigid life of conquered cities.

"If we can get through to higher altitudes," Xandibaum said, "we'll have a chance to survive. It's a thin chance, at best, but now it's our only chance."

"How soon do you think we'll have pursuers on the trail?"

"As soon as those two dead inspectors are missed. Six-six-six, one of the brainist of the monsters, will put two and two together. The two dead guards out on the boundary, and a third—myself—*missing!* Right away someone—some monster, that is—will be dispatched to investigate my living quarters."

"What if they can't get in? You locked all the extra doors, I remember." Vincent was thinking of that wonderful supply of scientific equipment for the manufacture of synthetic foods and clothing. He also thought of the scientist's manuscripts, his diary, his power-driven spider shells that had given him such a perfect disguise.

"Of course I put on every possible lock—in the last eight years one of my specialties had been to devise safeguards for my properties. But I'll be lucky if any of that stuff is spared. As soon as Six-six-six gets suspicious he'll have the place blasted."

Vincent considered this. It struck him hard to realize what a fiasco this adventure had become. And yet the whole failure hung upon that slight chance—that inspection had happened to come while Xandibaum was away.

On the other hand, if Xandibaum hadn't been away—that is, if he hadn't chanced to be on guard duty out on the north boundary of that countryside, where the time chain came down, what would have happened to Vincent's party?

Considering Lindova's swift fate, the answer to that question was only too apparent. That three of them were still alive and in the care of Xandibaum was after all more than average luck.

They trudged along silently. Vincent's conversation with Xandibaum had been relayed to the others, and it gave them all food for thought. And cause for added fears. The two non-English-speaking members of the party could not help wondering about this man Xandibaum.

Did Xandibaum hate them for coming? Had they intruded with less welcome than Vincent had once intruded upon the life of the Cro-Magnon? It was plain that they had upset Xandibaum's well regulated captive life. Unless he could appreciate the vision that had brought them here, Xandibaum had reason to hate them.

NOW the grade was getting steep along the mountainous foothills. They stopped to rest.

Dawn was showing gray and pink across to their left, as they looked back over their course. Xandibaum pointed back to certain topological landmarks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There is where you arrived. That is a territorial boundary, where I was standing guard. And it is the spot where the equinox of this age brings the time chain."

Now for the first time since his brief words at the beginning of their flight, the warmth of fellowship came into Xandibaum's voice.

"We've been too hurried for me to tell you before," he said, "but I appreciate from the bottom of my heart your coming. Do you realize that this courageous thing you have done gives me a hope I haven't had for eight years? You've brought the time chain up with you. It gives us all a chance to—"

Xandibaum's words trailed off into silence and in the grey of dawn Vincent saw that his sharp-lined old face gathered tenseness.

"Yes, I understand," Vincent commented. "If we can hold out for six months—"

"S-s-s-sh!"

"What's the matter?"

All voices cut down to a whisper. At a wave of the hand Xandibaum silenced them. Then they heard.

"It's people!" Penzi gasped to Hunzk.

From far down the slopes the little voices came. They were cheerful and musical and thoroughly indistinguishable. Vincent was aware at once that they were coming closer. He would have sworn that they were human voices.

"Human, nothing! That's the Trapdoor Monster's cunning imitation," Xandibaum snapped. "We're being pursued. Come on!"

They ran for half a mile along the rugged terrain. At present they dare not change their course, because there was the grasshopper and his load of baggage to be considered.

"Can—can we outrun them?" Penzi demanded breathlessly, and Vincent knew that she was good for a swifter pace. But Xandibaum was flagging.

Xandibaum's interpreted answer was that the monsters could cover ground two to three times as fast as a person.

"Our one chance to shake them off our trail is the grasshopper. He'll be waiting on this next knoll."

The voices were still a mile or two down the slope when Xandibaum waked up "Grundy." He removed a good share of the baggage, placed Vincent astride, and got on with him. It couldn't be ladies first this time, he said briefly. He would come back for Hunzk and Penzi soon. Vincent must learn to handle a grasshopper like a riding horse. In the coming six months they must all learn. . . .

Vincent dug his legs down beneath Grundy's folded wings. Xandibaum, seated ahead of him, barked a command. The giant grasshopper took a running start, sprang into the air and clattered away.

Vincent looked back and tossed a reassuring wave to Penzi. The scissors grip of his legs slipped. He almost fell! He bent to the grasshopper's back, grabbing with arms and legs for dear life—and held tight. No broncho rider at the rodeo ever had a wilder ride than this!

CHAPTER XI

Battle of Bolts and Fangs

IN a matter of thirty minutes faithful Grundy had succeeded in transferring all passengers and baggage to a point several miles from the pursuers' voices. There was a moment to breathe and eat and drink.

They were by a stream now. Xandibaum feared that the pursuers had picked up the trail by means of smell, so he had deliberately sought a stream. It meant a loss of time in their ascent up the mountainsides, and a further risk of running into the habitats of outlying spiders.

"Those are the chances we have to take," Xandibaum declared as the party waded downstream. "Those monsters will avoid the high altitudes if they can. But if they're on a direct trail they'll follow even at a sacrifice."

"We've got to hold on for six months," Vincent said grimly; and his remark brought a quick searching glance from the old sharp-faced scientist.

"That's the very point," he said, snapping his fingers. "And frankly, now that we've been driven out of my old stamping ground, I'm out of my territory. I only know this region from my study of man's maps. I don't know how the monster spiders' settlements may be distributed. But this I know: If we can shake our pursuers off last night's scent and locate in a high altitude away from any beaten trails, we can live for six months on herbs, if necessary, and they'll never find us."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The water swirled around their legs and little blobs of melting snow floated past them. Somewhere up this swift rocky stream were headwaters fed by glaciers. Long before that elevation would be reached, this party would find a comfortable altitude just chilly enough to stiffen the body of any Trapdoor Monster into sluggishness.

Xandibaum led the way out of the stream. Grundy the grasshopper listened alertly as his master barked orders to him. The beast bent down for loading—but suddenly he jumped up with a sharp sniff at the air.

"Get down there! What's the matter with you—"

Xandibaum's sharp worry lines deepened. He turned and passed critical eyes over the mossy river banks, the patch of open meadow, the forest that bounded it.

"We'd better get out of here! Grundy smells salt. It might be— Here, Grundy, I'll give you some salt."

Vincent saw that the scientist carried a small box for emergencies of this kind. Salt to Grundy was as indispensable as food to a hungry man. When a salt smell in the air caught Grundy at low ebb, he was uncontrollable until his need had been supplied.

Penzi was first to see the monster spider. She shrieked, then stifled her cry. Her arm went out rigid, pointing, trying to say what her lips couldn't.

IT was coming across the river. Not *down* the river, as they had come. There was no chance that it was one of the pursuers. There was a remote chance that it was a guard, or a new pursuer, who had been informed by a radiophone or other communication line.

It was hopping nimbly from stone to stone. It had not seen them!

It would not see them!

Xandibaum hurled a death bolt—a miniature hand-bomb no larger than a walnut. It struck. It was almost noiseless. Simply a *poooof!*

The monster spider hurdled, fell with twitching legs, floated away on the water stone-dead.

"There'll be others!" Xandibaum gasped, and he was right. Five of them came into view. The first started nimbly across the river, tripping lightly from stone to stone. It stopped, looked about. The others gathered back of it. The five of them were looking for their dead brother. What they must have seen was Xandibaum.

In the past five seconds Xandibaum had whispered quick orders and established his party in a position of temporary defense. Grundy, chewing on a mouthful of salt, had obediently crouched within the protection of a long jutting rock almost as large as himself. Back of him were the four of them, taking advantage of the animal's protective coloration.

Vincent, Penzi, and Hunzk watched through a transparent tip of a folded wing. Xandibaum held a position where his arms were free.

He hurled three death bolts. The spiders scattered and fell. Only one of the five succeeded in getting back to the opposite bank, and there he fell.

"Will there be more?" Vincent gasped, and Hunzk muttered in Cro-Magnon, "Let them come!"

Hunzk was gripping his poison-tipped spear, ready and eager. He wore a bundle of spears on his back—he had refused to let them be packed in with the luggage Grundy bore.

Vincent, clutching Penzi's hand, trying to press the terror away with confidence and courage. He nodded his head toward Hunzk, and Penzi saw what Vincent meant her to see: Hunzk the fighter!

It was good to see, somehow, in that terrifying minute when they were all four aware that a swarm of death might be closing in upon them. It was good to see Hunzk, crouched, tense, strong of body and keen of wit, hungry for a chance to fly into the merciless monsters that killed by stealth. That terrible blow Hunzk had taken—back there in the underground habitat at the edge of a monster's city—had not bled the spirit from him. It had keyed him up to struggle—to the last ounce of his blood—

It was inspiring, thought Vincent, and at the same time sickening. If this skirmish of four humans against unknown millions of monsters should be man's last stand against the insects, Vincent hoped that Hunzk would be the last man to go down.

Xandibaum passed out handfuls of death bolts.

"Save your spears," he ordered. "If it comes to hand-to-hand fighting you'll need them."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOW they came, a score of them—and more. They seeped out from between the trees along the opposite bank of the river until the ground was fairly alive with spidery arms and legs and dark crusty bodies. Some were upright, others crouched low.

"We've got ammunition enough to kill fifty or sixty," Xandibaum cracked. "If they swarm in greater numbers than that we've only one thing to do. Strip the baggage from the grasshopper and all get astride. If Grundy can take off we're safe. If not, man's days are over."

The Trapdoor Monsters were huddling on the opposite bank, keeping out of range, evidently holding a last minute conference.

"How many do you estimate?" Vincent asked.

"Too many . . . Eighty . . . Maybe a hundred."

The Cro-Magnon voice broke in. "Why don't we throw?"

"If he can throw that far," Xandibaum said eagerly to Vincent, "tell him to go ahead *and make it good!*"

Hunzk had his own ideas. If the swarm of monsters was out of range, it wouldn't be in a moment. He sprang up and dashed into the shallow river. A third of the way across he began throwing.

The first few *pooofs* scattered the swarm into a raging, chattering chaos. A dozen or more monsters fell lifeless. The others leaped over them and spread out along the river's edge like an advancing line of soldiers.

And then they came—fast!

And Vincent and Penzi and Xandibaum threw death bolts like mad.

"Come back!" Vincent cried at Hunzk. The Cro-Magnon's muscular arm worked with the speed and accuracy of a machine. Every monster that rushed at him became another stone in the dam of stumbling blocks around him.

"Come back!" Vincent cried again. He was afraid of his own aim, with Hunzk so far advanced.

Hunzk came back—his ammunition was exhausted. Twice on his retreat he thrust a spear that counted. Then two other monsters were on him—almost. His spear jabbed deep into one of them. He wrenched at it. It broke. The other monster pounced down with fangs ready.

In that instant Vincent hurled a death bolt with all the speed his arm would carry. He watched it fly from his hands. His eyes tried to turn away. He could not stand to see where that missile might strike.

Then he saw Hunzk running back, and the monster slipped into the water, bumped against a heap of bodies and tangled black legs, and floated down the river.

Again the four of them were fighting side by side, and their grasshopper was staying with them. Together they retreated across the clearing. The spiders came on, but less aggressively. It was almost certain death for any of them to get within range of Hunzk's arm.

"Keep back, Grundy!" Xandibaum muttered. "We're going to need you."

The spiders distributed themselves widely. They were forming a circle.

"It looks like this is the size of it," said Vincent.

"They're stymied," said Xandibaum. "They're not going to get any closer—Look! There goes a party of them back across the river. *I know one of those monsters!*"

VINCENT saw the group of five beating a swift retreat. There was something distinctive about the appearance of the one in the center—it had the same look of cruel, merciless destructive intelligence as the others, but in a more pronounced degree.

"I'll know that middle one if I see him again."

"That's Six-six-six," said Xandibaum. "I wonder what he's doing here. He's the master of one of the cities, the one we—" Xandibaum's face grew tighter. "He has a home somewhat apart from the city, I never knew where."

"We must have crashed it," Vincent said.

"It's no doubt somewhere across the river, and they saw us fly in upstream. No wonder we had a hundred guards on us. Well, there's one satisfaction. We've broken the backbone of that hundred, and before they can get reinforcements, Grundy will get us out of—"

"Look!" Penzi cried. "They're starting to make webs."

The thirty or forty monsters that had trailed out into a circle at the forest's edge were busily weaving their white strands.

Hunzk looked grave. He demanded to know what was happening.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Xandibaum warned of trickery. "Between spears and ammunition, we've got the edge. In fact, if we work it right, we can watch our chances to get closer and pick them off, one at a time. But they can play the same game. In fact that's probably what they're up to. The thing we've got to do is keep watch on all sides of the circle. Otherwise one of them will slip in here silently while our backs are turned, and plant his fangs— Here come three!"

The spurious attack from one side of the ring drew the three men into a moment of quick action. They each picked their victim, their shots went true.

Then they whirled, and Hunzk saw, not fifteen feet beyond the grasshopper's tail, another one.

"How'd *that* one get in?" Vincent yelled.

The invader chased away, then flopped into a heap as the penetrating little blast of explosive overtook it.

"Can you manage Grundy alone?" Xandibaum cracked at Vincent. "Get the girl on, ride out of here. Go straight north, as far as you can get in ten minutes. Then send Grundy back. He'll know where to come." The scientist began to strip the luggage off the grasshopper's back.

"Where *is* Penzi?" Vincent blurted. *"Penzi! Where are you?"*

Three men and their beast of flight cast their frantic eyes over the clearing. Across the smooth grassy meadow the spiders were industriously stringing their web—from the semicircle of tree trunks to the jutting rocks along the river's edge. Within that circle no Penzi was to be seen!

CHAPTER XII

A Chance for Man?

"I TELL you there's no use looking any farther," Xandibaum said finally. "We've done everything in the world that can be done. You'll have to give her up, Vincent."

And in his soft Cro-Magnon tongue Hunzk pronounced the same verdict. "Their cunning has won, Ponpo. They killed her with their lightning poison. They raced away with her body before we had time to turn and see. They—"

Vincent was not listening. He would not believe it anyway. He was too stunned to do anything but tramp over the grassy meadow, searching—everlastingly searching.

The battle had ended at noon. Every last web-weaver that had not beaten a retreat across the river had paid with death.

Now it was growing late. Xandibaum was listening sharply for the expected voices of an approaching body of reinforcements.

The sun sank low, and the long shadows of the giant grasshopper lay in thin lines of blue across the grass.

"Any further delay will make the tragedy complete," said Xandibaum, taking Vincent by the arm. "I know you can't give up easily. You think that there must be one of these trapdoor habitats here in this clearing. I think you are right, for she vanished too quickly to have been carried to the river or the forest. But we have searched in vain for a trapdoor—"

"We must search more!"

"Even if there is a trapdoor somewhere in this ground, it would be so well concealed that we might search forever—"

"I'll gladly search forever—"

"Listen, Vincent," Xandibaum said brusquely. "You force me to say it. If one of these devilish trapdoor spiders pulled her into his home you would not want to look at her—afterwards. Remember her as you last saw her—a courageous little beauty, garbed in that blue velvet dress that flashed in the sunshine as she fought by your side—"

They made two trips of it, and planted their camp in a safe nook high in the mountainside.

And then Hunzk vanished too! It was a shocking blow.

"They will get us the next time they come," said Xandibaum heavily. "We haven't much ammunition left. And the poisoned spears are gone."

Vincent stared. "Gone? Isn't that odd?"

Xandibaum nodded. "It is, when you stop to think of it. If a trapdoor spider got him . . ."

There was a long silence. Then Vincent said, "May I borrow the grasshopper? I am going back to search for Penzi again."

THE faithful Grundy clattered through the starlit sky with Vincent astride, and glided down to the river's edge.

The air was foul with the stench of dead trapdoor monsters. Vincent wondered if these cruel beasts had no respect for the dead. A stir from across the river an-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swered his question. In the dim light of dawn he could see two grasshoppers at work. Their golden bodies moved sluggishly back and forth among the trees. They were gathering up the dead bodies and piling them in a heap by the river bank.

Vincent rode his beast back in to the edge of the timber, watching sharply for signs of monsters as he crossed through a break in the barricade of spider web.

Grundy suddenly became hard to manage. Salt! The beast was hungry for it, and Vincent knew, from the scientist's instructions, that it would go to any lengths to get it.

But Vincent also knew that a smell of salt in the air must have stimulated that want. That was a warning. Some *body* was not far away. It might be a dead spider, or a live one, or an injured *person* alive or dead. He recalled Xandibaum's warning.

"When they get panicky for salt, watch out for your own safety. If you've got any injuries and they smell blood, they'll go for persons."

Vincent wasn't sure what to do. "Get along, Grundy," he muttered, but the animal was going its own headstrong way—toward the source of the smell—

It couldn't be those dead monsters, for the wind was from the north, and that was leading Grundy into the forest.

Then the wind shifted, and the grasshopper whirled and stopped and refused to obey. Vincent wondered. Did he dare lead it to one of those carcasses of monsters? Would it be satisfied with a bite or two, or become drunk with a thirst for more—or even poisoned? Many miles lay between Vincent and the uplands.

In an impetuous gesture, Grundy took decision in his own front legs, so to speak. He threw Vincent off, pounced at him, grabbed him with his front feet.

In a flash it occurred to Vincent that his own perspiration was a source of danger. If he had had a shirt on his back he would have gladly given it in exchange for a chance to escape the hungry gaze of the beast's face.

"Stupid!" he muttered at himself, reaching to his belt. He tore the package of lunch free as he struggled out of the grasshopper's grasp. The package was mostly meat, wrapped in bark, and the instant he tossed it to the ground in front of the beast's eager mouth the crisis was over.

The grasshopper munched heartily, and though it wasn't much of a meal the beast perked up ready for orders.

They rode back to the edge of the clearing. Vincent took in the situation as revealed under the shafts of the rising sun, keeping himself well in the shadows.

One lone monster spider was in command of the two servant grasshoppers. It chirped and chattered in a way that argued it had no particular feelings one way or the other for its dead compatriots. After the two grasshoppers bundled off a load of the corpses, the monster crossed the river to the clearing and went directly toward the spot where, in Vincent's opinion, Penzi had last been seen. There it stopped, scratched at the earth.

"Get ready, Grundy!" Vincent muttered.

AS Vincent charged in toward the monster, it turned and saw him. Then with almost lightning action it threw a trapdoor up from the ground and started into the hole.

The trapdoor gave a wobbling motion that caught the monster unaware, and in the next second Vincent plunged his spear into the hideous black body.

"That's one more, Grundy," Vincent smiled through clenched teeth. "Now stay right here. I'm going to—"

The echo of something the scientist had told him gave him a choking, sickening sensation. But he would go through with it.

He jerked the spear out of the crusty shell of the monster that had turned dead half-way through the trapdoor. He climbed cautiously down through the opening. He knew that ordinarily there was only one spider to a hole, but he was trying to watch everything.

Clinging to the web-spun wall he peered down. He could see the whole cavern to the lower end. It was empty—almost.

There was one little four-inch patch of blue velvet at the bottom!

That piece of goods had been torn—carefully torn from Penzi's dress! It was a deliberate message!

In five minutes of careful investigating, Vincent found the other signs that Penzi had left for him. In the wall she had scraped the web away to a patch of fresh earth and there she had drawn an arrow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It pointed up.

Of course she would go *up!* That was the only way out. But that finger mark in the damp clay meant more. It was the direction by which she would try to escape. Climbing up to the opening, Vincent caught a landmark to the north—that was the way Grundy had been taking him during those minutes of salt famine!

Vincent clambered past the lid—a heavy thing. It must have taken almost superhuman strength for Penzi to struggle through—or was she carried through? There was a tinge of dark red against a rough edge, and a slight dripping of dried blood at the nearby wall of web.

"On, Grundy! Faster! Faster!" They were headed north again, and Vincent recognized the course of a few minutes earlier.

He took a parting glance back at the clearing. The servant grasshoppers had not returned. There was no sign of life, or of danger following. Vincent sharpened his eyes to the darkness of the forest.

"Steady now. . . . Steady . . ."

The grasshopper began to sniff. He showed no signs of becoming hard to manage. He was holding to the exact course that Vincent put him on. But his manner betrayed an interest and a curiosity that matched Vincent's own. This was a natural path they were following. It was dark and leafy and—

Vincent shuddered. The deadliness of fangs was something hard to keep out of mind. After he'd seen them in action once—and so nearly a second time that it still left him breathless to think of it—he couldn't ride through a narrow leafy path like this without thinking how easy it would be—

The grasshopper gave another sniff. It had been walking. It wanted to run. It sensed something too subtle for Vincent's senses.

"Are you running toward—or away from?" Vincent muttered. Then, "Go ahead, fellow. Whatever it is, I'll never be any nearer ready for it—"

His hand froze on his spear. He bent low, patted the beast for more speed. Something white ahead—something blue—

"Go it, fellow, go it!"

The beast ran low, almost as if it would take off into flight. That white and blue—*it was Penzi in her torn dress!—she was bound to a web beneath a tree!*

ACROSS the curve of the path Vincent could see her—and beyond he saw the other living form—a black one!

Even against the dark background of trees he *knew* that gleamy-shelled devilish-looking monster. It was Six-six-six!

The monster, a few feet beyond his white prisoner, turned this way and that, looking for the approaching footsteps. Vincent wondered—was the sound of an approaching grasshopper ever anything but a harmless sound to Six-six-six, the master of cruelty and death? Did this highly advanced spider *know*—

At the quick turn of the monster, Vincent knew that the spider knew! He could almost feel the focus of the monster's eyes upon him.

In that split second the race began. The spider bared its fangs, chose its victim—not the grasshopper, not Vincent—but Penzi!

"Faster! Faster!" Vincent slapped the beast's side as they rounded the final curve. At the same instant the monster sprang at the girl—and Vincent came on with his spear frozen hard and sure in his hand.

In Vincent's dreams he would relive that moment of his life over and over. It would waft through his mind's eye in slow motion, it would flick through at racing speed, it would stop like a suspended animation film.

It would always seem to him, as his memory would flash back to that anguished moment, that everything in his consciousness did suspend—for the next thing that was in his memory was Penzi's voice, a voice that was mostly breath, breath that was strangely warming to his face. He was cutting away the spider webs that bound her, binding her torn arm, asking her how she managed to get out of that trapdoor, asking her a dozen questions at once—

"How did I ever get *in* that trapdoor—that's what I'll never forgive myself for!" she said, half-laughing, half-crying. "I was the only one that saw it happen—the lid flew up and a monster crawled out—*right beside me*—and I almost fainted. The thing turned around and saw you men fighting and gave a jump of surprise and started back toward me. That's when I fell and the lid fell over me—and there I lay for hours wondering which would come down—you or the monster!"

"We looked everywhere for you,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Penzi . . ."

"That's what I decided. I couldn't hear you—I screamed my head off but I knew you couldn't hear me."

"But you got out—"

"Look at my hands, Ponpo!" she laughed. "I had to dig out one side from under the door. Then the lid finally tipped, and I saw I could get out, but I was almost afraid to go. I finally heard a voice—I thought it must be you, Ponpo. It sounded like you were calling—only I couldn't understand you. I crawled out and listened.

"I groped my way through the trees. The voice kept going back farther and farther in the woods. Then I got suspicious. It wasn't you—I knew it wasn't—and I began to run the other way—and then the voice came closer and closer—and just at daybreak—"

"Lie down, Penzi, you're going to faint."

"I'm all right now," the girl smiled.

"I found your messages, Penzi—the velvet and the arrow. And Grundy here showed me the way—"

The grasshopper looked up at hearing his name called. He was nibbling at the dark mass with the spear sticking up through it. He turned around and spread his wings to let them mount.

In a few moments they were clattering through the air on their way to the safe mountain camp.

"Hold on tight, Penzi!" Vincent shouted, as the wind blew against their faces. "We've got to get back to Xandibaum. He's alone now . . ."

"Alone?"

"Yes, Hunzk has disappeared, too. I'm afraid he's dead."

BUT Xandibaum wasn't alone when they got back, he was right in the middle of a one man battle, and as they flew in, they saw him surrounded by hundreds of the trapdoor monsters. Even as they watched, horror-stricken, one of them darted past a force bolt that struck down a half-dozen of its companions, and leaped on the old man's back. He went down, buried beneath the horrid bodies of his killers.

Vincent ordered Grundy down, and they landed at the base of a small cliff. There he found a small cave.

"We'll stay here," he said hopefully. "Maybe they haven't seen us, and will not find us. When night comes, we will try for the higher altitudes and see if we can't stick it out until the time chain returns . . ."

But his hopes were vain. The spiders *had* seen them, and they came swarming up the canyon now.

Penzi saw them coming.

"It is the end, my Vincent," she said simply, a brave smile on her white face. "We will not leave this cave."

Vincent said nothing, because there was nothing to say. But he took his spears from Grundy's back, and slapped the faithful animal's flank.

"Go, Grundy," he said. "No need for you to die."

Then he pulled Penzi into the small cave and began piling rocks before the entrance. Before the oncoming spiders had climbed to the cliff base, he had the opening sealed, except for several places where he could thrust out his spear, to keep off any spiders who tried to tear down the barrier.

"They won't get us soon," he said grimly.

Penzi kissed him, and bravely she took up a spear and took her place beside him. "We will kill a lot of them," she said.

Something went through Vincent in that moment, and he wished mightily that he didn't have to die. What he was about to lose was too great . . .

Outside, the first of the spiders arrived. They began to tear at the barrier. Vincent jabbed with his spear. A spider went limp, flopped back. His companions dragged him away, took his place. Vincent jabbed again and again, and always it was the same. More spiders took the dead one's place.

Penzi stabbed, too, and she got her share of the trapdoor monsters. But Vincent could see that the grim business was getting to be too much for her. She was getting deathly pale and her eyes held a haunted look.

He pulled her away from the barrier, took her tenderly in his arms, and kissed her. Then he made her sit down at the back of the tiny cave, and went back to his defense work.

Once a spear was torn from his grasp. Another time a blow at the other end slammed him against the stone wall, and his arm and shoulder dripped blood. Finally he had only two spears left.

Then, at last, dark descended, and the attack ceased. It got chilly in the cave, and Vincent knew it must be colder out-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side. He turned to Penzi.

"They have gone for the night. The cold is too much for them."

He lay down beside her and took her in his arms. She snuggled in the warmth of his arms, and after awhile she went to sleep. Vincent looked down at her and kissed her tenderly.

He didn't mean to go to sleep. He intended to remain awake on guard. But he didn't. And so it was that when he awoke, it was to the echoes of a ringing scream of terror in his very ear.

HE leaped to his feet. It had been Penzi who screamed. It was bright daylight, and outside the sun streamed through a gap in the barrier of rocks. And through that gap was coming the horrid body of a trapdoor spider.

Vincent leaped forward with a shout, snatched up one of his last two remaining spears and stuck it into the spider's body. The spider screeched in agony, stiffened, jerked back, and rolled down the slope outside stone dead. It carried Vincent's spear with it.

Grimly Vincent took up his last spear and stood squarely in the gap the spiders had made. He wielded the weapon until his arms were weary, and the ring of bodies around him was shoulder high.

Then, finally, the poison of its tip seemed gone. When he prodded the spider, the insect did not die. Instead it screamed insanely and lunged forward again, even more ferociously.

Vincent knew this was the end. And he faced it. But suddenly the spider stiffened, fell. From its back protruded a spear. And outside there was a great yelling and screaming. And in the cave opening there was a familiar figure.

"Hunzk!" yelled Vincent. "Hunzk! You're alive!"

Hunzk leaped into the cave, his face wreathed in smiles; smiles that struggled through obvious pain. He was severely bitten by spiders. "Yes," he said. "I am alive. But soon there will be no live spiders in this world. I have brought an ape army, with poison spears. Already we have killed over a thousand . . ."

He pitched forward on his face.

SEVERAL hours later Vincent and Penzi knew the whole truth. But it wasn't in a happy way they learned it. Because they got it from the stiffening lips of a dying Hunzk.

The main battle was over, and all through the countryside trapdoor spiders were being hunted down and dug out by vengeful apes, now at last given the weapons that made them powerful enemies to the spiders. Unlike the tiger, the ape was powerful on the ground *and* in the trees, and it was death to the unwary spider who ventured beneath a tree.

Hunzk had gone into the forest, found the ape chief, and talked to him in the tongue which was their common root language, Cro-Magnon and anthropoid ape. He had easily enlisted their services, for life had been constant flight and death for them while the spiders ruled.

So, he had come out of the forest with an army of apes, armed with poisoned spears. And he had arrived in time to rescue Vincent and Penzi.

Now he called the ape chief to him.

"Guide them," he told Vincent and Penzi. "Give them the push that will make them the human beings of 1941, your own world. From this day on, and I speak the words of the ape chief also, you are sister and brother, kin of the same family, honored by each other. Mingle, and teach and learn from each other, for the destiny of man lies in your hands and in the apes'."

And Hunzk lay back, in his glazing eyes the brightness of a dream—a Cro-Magnon's dream of a great civilization that *might* have been, had it not been for the trapdoor monsters. But somehow it was a dream realized. And perhaps, in that moment, he foresaw in Vincent and Penzi a legend that would ring down through the twentieth century—a legend that he had never known, because it was out of his future.

But as Hunzk died, Vincent turned to Penzi, wonder in his eyes. It was still there when he took her in his arms. And it became a strange joy to him, days later, when the ape chief led them to a warm country, where life was easy, and the whole land was a beautiful garden where the apes might one day become men.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You've never seen a horoscope like this before

A One Year Horoscope-With a 365 Day Money Back Guarantee

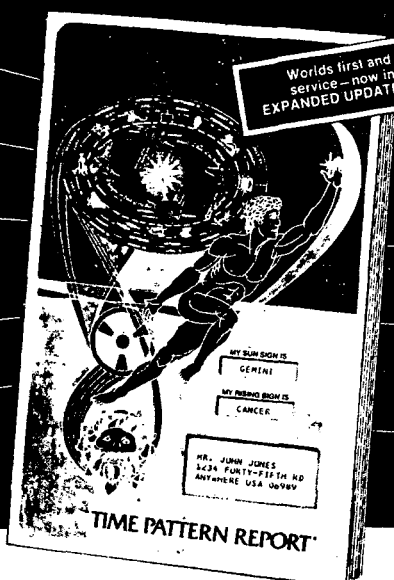
Individually Prepared

Your Character Analyzed

Programmed by world-famous astrologer Katina Theodossiou

It's prepared with an IBM Computer

For you and you alone based on your month, day, year, time and place of birth


Worlds first and largest horoscope service—now introduces the NEW EXPANDED UPDATED Time Pattern Report
MY SUN SIGN IS GEMINI
MY RISING SIGN IS CANCER
MR. JOHN JONES
1234 FORTY-FIFTH RD
ANYWHERE USA 00000
TIME PATTERN REPORT

Based on 25 million pieces of information

With more than 20,000 words

12 months of projections — trends for the year — highlights for month — important days pinpointed.

Unprecedented one year money back guarantee.....

1973 Time Pattern Research Institute
A Division of Cadence Industries Corp

You haven't seen a horoscope like this before, unless you have actually seen one of our in-depth personalized horoscopes. We invented computerized astrology 5 years ago when we learned that millions of people were interested in personal authentic astrology, not the short forecasts found in newspapers.

Many people could not afford the time and money required to have a personalized horoscope cast by a qualified astrologer. Such reports could cost up to $300.

Newspaper and magazine astrology is based on the twelve Sun Signs, so everyone in the world born during the same period gets the same horoscope — 12 possibilities in all. Authentic astrology is based on the month, day, year, time and place of birth, with the positions of all the planets taken into account — so the possibilities of variation are infinite. For instance, two people born on the same day in the same city, but at different times, get different horoscopes. Two people born on the same day at the same time, but in different places, get different horoscopes.

The Time Pattern horoscope is an individual, 20,000 word report all about you and you only. It describes your character as well as your potential in life, love and business. It also projects the trend of events you can expect during the next 12 months, giving highlights for each month and pinpointing individual days that are astrologically significant.

Time Pattern Research Institute was selected by the country's leading department stores as the most reliable astrological service available.

1. You receive your report within 10 days from receipt of your order.
2. You get the most comprehensive astrological report ever made available — 20,000 words, a whole book about you and you alone for only $20.00.
3. If you are not pleased with the report for any reason whatsoever, you may return it any time **within a whole year from the receipt of your report for a full refund.**
4. We predict that you will be astounded by the accuracy of your report.

You are one in a million, not one in twelve. Get the horoscope that fits you and no one else. Get a Time Pattern Report®.

Time Pattern Research Institute, Dept. L-UF7
227 East 45th St., New York, N. Y. 10017

Please prepare for me a confidential in-depth personal Time Pattern Report which will include my projections for the next 12 months. I enclose $20 plus 75c for shipping and handling, plus tax, or charge to my account. 365 Day money-back guarantee.

Charge my: (check one) ☐ Diners Club ☐ Master Charge ☐ Carte Blanche ☐ Bank Americard ☐ American Express

Acct. No. _____ Exp Date _____

☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Miss (Please print)

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Date of Birth Place of Birth

Month _____ City _____

Date _____ State _____

Year _____ Country _____

Time of Birth _____ A.M. _____ P.M.
If exact time isn't known we'll use 12:00 noon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The LOST COLONY

—a strange civilization in the heart of the Superstition Mountains

by JAMES NORMAN

The maps showed a lake, but this was no lake—it was a bit of hell on Earth, and Temple landed right in the middle of it!

THE tiny Arizona flying field had been carefully swept by a hundred brooms and the volunteer field-hands stood back, watching the trim fuselage of the Douglas cabin ship shudder behind the gunned motor.

Jack Temple, the lanky young pilot, shoved back his cockpit window, waving at the men below him. "Okay," he yelled. "Clear away!"

Suddenly a paunchy little man pushed his way through the crowd. "Jack!" he yelled. "Listen Jack. Be careful for God's sake! When you get over the Superstitions, skirt Phoenix. For God's sake don't land there or fly over the city. Head directly for the San Joachim oil fields. And keep your radio buzzing. So long!"

Temple's eyes twinkled without smiling. His lips were set as tight as fiddle strings. He gunned the plane motor and the ship gave a sudden surge. The little man below was almost bowled over by the roaring wind from the propeller wash.

A moment later the plane raced across the field in a storm of dust. The tail flipped up, nose rode level, then the wings took air and daylight showed between the earth and wheels.

The plane circled, gaining altitude to match the jagged circle of mountains that cut the sky around Globe City. At nine thousand feet, Temple leveled her off and headed westward. His fingers, which had grown rigid on the control stick, relaxed slightly. He jerked a blue handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the beads of sweat from his forehead.

"Jack," he murmured to himself, "If you keep on riding this stuff, you're going to need insurance. And the companies don't like to pay off on sure death."

His glance swept over his shoulder toward the rows of rubber-lined, anchored boxes in the cabin behind him. *Nitro-glycerin!* The boxes were marked *—Danger! Explosives!*

"An understatement," Temple grinned.

A pint of the touchy stuff could blow up a mountain. A blow from a feather was good enough to set it off. The boxes were a rush assignment. Earlier in the morning a dangerous well-fire had blasted California's San Joachim oil fields wide open. Only nitro-glycerin could stop it. Then a series of mys-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terious explosions had blown up the two main nitro-dumps at Signal Hill and San Diego.

A rush call was sent to Phoenix. They had no nitro so Jack Temple's plane was chartered to fly down to the Globe City mines, pick up a load and shuttle it back to California.

"And when the Southwest Airlines hired me, they asked for safe pilots," Temple muttered grimly. "But they didn't say how safe the pilots would be."

PASSING over Claypool and Miami, he climbed his plane to ten thousand feet and crossed the first ridges of the Superstition Mountains. An endless expanse of rugged, foreboding peaks swung below the wings of his plane.

Temple's fingers tightened again on his control stick, his eyes sharply accounting his instruments. The Superstition Mountains were dangerous. They shot up tricky air currents and there was no place to land with or without nitro. Many people had disappeared in those mountains and even the Zuñi indians shunned it as an abode of evil spirits.

Then something strange happened. Temple whistled in sharp surprise, looked twice at the familiar valley his plane droned over, then scanned his map. "My God!" he gasped. "It ain't there!"

He wiped his brow again. Two years ago he had passed over that same valley and there had been a lake there. Volcano Lake. Now it was dry as a bone!

Suddenly his plane pitched wildly, heaved upward by violent, concussive blasts of air. "What the devil now," he grunted. Then he gaped incredulously at the mountain below him. The whole mountain seemed to shudder, then blew up in a thousand bits of rock, dust, and orange flame.

Jagged bits of stone whistled a thousand feet skyward, cutting through the wings of the plane like shrapnel. The plane rocked left and right and zoomed into a spin, completely out of control.

While fighting the joystick and notching up the revs, Temple gritted his teeth. "Gees, did *I* do that," he grunted. Half expecting that one of the nitro boxes had broken from its mooring and slipped through the floor chute, he glanced back into the cabin. No! All the boxes were there. Funny!

Sweat oozed from his pores when he finally got the plane out of the spin and the motor began to miss. "As if nitro weren't bad enough trouble," he groaned. "I can't dump it and I've got to land. I've got to keep the stuff whole or it'll mean my job."

His eye sorted out an apparently level spot in the valley below. Then he switched on his radio. "Hello, Phoenix," he called hoarsely. "Temple calling Phoenix. . . . Southwest Airlines. . . ."

Furiously he jammed the microphone back on its instrument panel hook. The radio didn't work. He glanced at the altimeter. Eight hundred feet now. He couldn't dump the nitro in time. He'd have to land with that load of hell.

THE motor gave its final, choking cough and a spine chilling wind whistled past the fuselage as the plane went into a long glide toward the small field. Temple's fingers gripped the controls so tightly the bones beneath his knuckles showed white. He nursed the plane, with its lethal cargo, twenty feet, ten feet, five feet, and then—a smooth, three point landing.

Braking the ship before it rolled to the sheer mountain barrier surround-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the valley, he slumped back in his seat a moment. "Good Lord, I'm still alive," he sighed. Then remembering what had happened, he gazed at the surrounding mountains. "What the devil blew that mountain up?" he asked.

He jiggered with the radio again but it was still dead. Then, gingerly, he stepped past the nitro boxes in the cabin and eased himself out the door. It was at that moment his senses warned him. There was something peculiar about the valley; something that made his flesh creep over his bones.

The valley floor seemed half filled with a blue haze, a volcanic vapor that had partially drifted away. It had gathered in crevices on the mountain sides and in some places looked like water.

"Volcanic stuff," Temple grunted. "Maybe there was a lot of it in here before. That's why we thought there was a lake down here before."

He went about, sniffing. Strangely, there was no odor from what little of the blue haze remained in the valley.

Then, suddenly he came to an abrupt halt. His mouth sagged, aghast, then clamped shut. He blinked ahead at the amazing groups of pyramid shaped buildings that shone in the sun at the far end of the valley.

"A mirage—or maybe that nitro did blow me up and I ain't here the way I think I am," he muttered. "But dammit, that looks too solid for a mirage. I'm going to see."

He stepped back to the plane, took a revolver and holster from the cabin, buckled the belt around his waist and eased the gun in its saddle. Then he set out toward the pyramid buildings.

THE lower terraces of the pyramid city were deserted as he made his cautious entry. It was a strange place with an eerie atmosphere. Temple knew enough about architecture in the Southwest to realize that this wasn't a pueblo city. It was completely foreign to anything he had ever seen.

He turned down a dark passage that led to a large oval chamber. Approaching the chamber door, he suddenly stopped. His hand dropped automatically to the butt of his pistol and his jaw relaxed as if he had been slapped in the face. He stared ahead in astonishment.

Through a slit in the ceiling, a shaft of sunlight stabbed into the dark room, lighting a strange, yellow robed priest.

"Good Lord!" Temple gasped. "Sun worshipers."

His amazed eyes were fascinated by the white skinned priest who was a good eight feet tall. Resplendent in his flame-like robe, the priest held a golden bowl to the shaft of sunlight. The bowl flashed a dazzling light, gathered the rays of sun within its concave hollow, and set smoldering a piece of tinder held there.

A murmur that was half awe and half prayer swelled from the shadowy corners of the chamber. Jack Temple's muscles tensed, his sharp eyes probed the darkness and he let out a second low whistle. *A hundred white men, all as gigantic in frame as the priest, were kneeling before the altar.*

Temple slowly backed away, moving on cat-like feet. "They aren't Zuñis," he muttered. "They're so damn big they look like they walked right out of a fairy tale. I can't afford to get mixed up in any ritual. Better get my plane out, then come back with a couple of pals after the nitro is safe and sound."

Just as he had cleared the passageway, his foot slipped upon a pebble. He went down face first, his gun clattering across the stone floor, making a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thunderous noise, it seemed.

"Clumsy ox!" he swore to himself.

Instantly, the passage and doorway filled with clamoring voices. Temple leaped to his feet and found himself surrounded by a circle of giant men with drawn knives. They were talking in a language that had absolutely no resemblance to anything he had ever heard.

He reached for his gun but one of the giants stepped on it. The knives hedged in closer.

"Say, what the devil is this?" Temple stormed. "What are you doing down here in the Superstitions, and who are you?"

The white giants looked at each other in surprise as he spoke. They began talking again in their unintelligible language. Then two of them took his arms and pulled him back toward the passageway.

"Wait a minute," yelled Temple. "I ain't going nowhere. I've got a job to deliver. Come on, answer my questions."

The men jerked him again.

Suddenly, Temple pulled himself loose. Knowing it was futile to face such overwhelming odds, he feinted toward one, bowled another over in a sudden rush, and using his best football tactics, lunged toward the opening he had made.

Taken by surprise, the strange men hesitated, giving him just that split second he needed to break free. In another instant, he was running a dozen yards ahead of them and holding the distance.

"If I only get to that plane," he gasped as his feet pounded down the last few steps of the city, "I'll toss a can of nitro at them."

He raced now with every bit of energy his body contained. His lungs burned, gasping to drag in the rarefied mountain air. He could hear them coming from behind. They were gaining, yet he didn't dare waste a second to glance over his shoulder.

Then, suddenly, something struck him in the back of the head. He stumbled forward a few paces, his head whirling in semi-darkness. The walls of the valley seemed to gyrate around his head in a made tangle. . . .

WHEN Jack Temple again opened his eyes he had lost all sense of time. Although his head ached tremendously, he succeeded in focusing his gaze upon the large airy room in which he rested.

The sun was still shining in. Perhaps he had only been unconscious a few minutes . . . perhaps this was another day. He groaned at the thought of the people in California waiting for their shipment of nitro. They'd never believe him if he tried to tell them about giant white men in the Superstition Mountains.

"There I go, half cocked," he muttered grimly. "Who says I'm going to get away from here."

Although his feet had not been bound, his hands were tightly pinioned behind his back. He began desperately working at the bonds but with little success. Then he searched the chamber for something that he might use to saw the cords.

At a large table in the center of the room he suddenly paused, staring curiously at the strange charts spread upon the surface.

"Good Lord," he gasped. "Talk about dictators remaking countries! Here's somebody who's got continents on his brain."

His eyes roved over the unfamiliar charts. In one, a good part of the Pacific ocean was filled by three linked continents that extended from forty de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grees latitude south to thirty degrees north—the whole of the Pacific from Australia to Hawaii. Cities dotted the strange continents. Other cities dotted the coast of California and South America. But they weren't in the locations of such centers as Los Angeles, San Diego and Panama.

"You have interest in the charts?"

Temple whirled like a top, facing the tall, red robed priest he had seen earlier. The priest's cheeks were deeply ridged. His eyes flashed intelligence, plus a certain ruthless element always to be found in a natural leader.

"You're talking English?" Temple gasped.

"Yes, I talk the language of the enemy," the priest stated. "But there are many words that I do not yet understand. I am Villac Umu, priest of this outpost of the Mother Country Mu."

"Mu?" Temple asked curiously.

"Mu!" Villac Umu replied, pointing his finger at the three-link continent upon the chart.

A curious sensation of half-belief, half bewilderment, ran through the fringes of Temple's memory. Some latent spark caught his imagination.

"My Lord, man!" he gulped. "Mu! . . . The Lemurians. . . . Impossible. There's never been any proof that the continents of Mu existed. You're not trying to tell me you people are Lemurians? Why that ocean out there is as empty as my stomach at the moment."

The priest's face clouded.

"We are not Mu," he said. "We are an outpost of the Lemurian colony." The priest indicated the map again, showing the extensive Lemurian colonies in the area that was California, then pointing to the Superstition Mountains, saying, "We . . . outpost!"

TEMPLE felt his head whirl dizzily. He stared incredulously at the map, then at Villac Umu. "Hell, that's no colony," he said. "That's California."

"They are the enemy," replied the priest darkly. "They have overpowered our coastal colonies and we cannot return to Lemuria until this strange enemy is vanquished."

"Get back to Lemuria?" Temple said. "Either you or I are wacky, mostly you. The continent of Mu was supposed to have slid under the Pacific during an earthquake—that was 12,000 years ago."

The priest now looked puzzled.

"I left Lemuria four years ago," he said. "Eight seasons ago there *was* a great earthquake. It caused volcanic gas to fill our valley and put us to sleep for a few moons perhaps. But when the blue gas disappeared we awakened and now for two years we have prepared to destroy the enemy to our west. Then we can return to Lemuria which is also called Mu."

"Two years . . . volcanic gas!" Temple gasped. For a moment he leaned against the table, hardly able to control himself. His mind raced madly fitting together facts that looked like sheer impossibility. Could he believe it? It seemed utterly mad to imagine that!

Was this mysterious race of white giants lost in Superstition Mountains really an outpost of the sunken continent of Mu? Had they slept thousands of years, remaining in perfect preservation within a cloak of blue volcanic gas which American cartographers had imagined was a valley lake?

The proof was there! It was there in the stern figure of Villac Umu the priest!

Jack Temple forgot his ordinary, easy going ways. He forgot that he was just a transport pilot. He was now facing history, a strange, eerie twist in the world's history.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Little beads of sweat hung on his brow as he forced himself to be calm. He paced up and down the chamber, his wrists chaffing at the cords that bound them.

"Lemurians!" he muttered in an awed voice. "My God! Twelve thousand years! And they don't know that twelve thousand years have passed; that their race has disappeared; that they've slept all this time . . . No! It can't be . . ."

He suddenly turned toward the priest. "Say, if you're a Lemurian, how'd you learn English? And how do you know there are strange people in the California belt?"

Villac Umu flashed him an excited look. "Come," he ordered. In less than a moment he had led the way into another chamber. It was darker. Temple hesitated, accustoming his eyes to the changed light.

The new room was filled with an assortment of weird technical apparatus, none which seemed at all familiar to Temple. The walls were covered with great charts. Those at least, he recognized. They showed the stratifications under the West Coast mountains—the cavernous oil domes and gas deposits beneath the surface.

The priest twisted a copper knob and suddenly a metal sheath upon a narrow table slid back, revealing a luminous, convex crystal. An eerie light glowed within the crystal and unexpected, static-like sounds flooded through the room.

JACK TEMPLE stared into the thing, his mouth opening in astonment. "Television!" he gasped. "And without electrical power!"

A view of one of California's highways with autos racing along it was framed in the crystal. And the clear sound of the auto horns and singing tires could be heard.

"So I learned your language," said the priest.

An idea formed in Temple's mind. "Why don't you turn that apparatus so you can look eastward?" he demanded.

The priest shook his head mysteriously. "It will not work in the direction of the other three winds," he explained. "We can only look in the direction of the mother continent, Lemuria which is Mu."

"Then you don't know about places like New York or that America's other civilization is behind you?" said Temple. "You're missing something."

"Lemuria is the only civilization," the priest answered coldly. "Tomorrow we destroy the enemy who has overpowered our costal colonies."

"Destroy California?" Temple began to laugh.

Anger mounted within the Lemurian priest and his eyes flashed at Temple.

"We have begun," he said. "Already our plans are prepared. The science of Lemuria is great. We have knowledge of the gas deposits beneath the coast. We can detonate the whole area at once, as we did to a small area of it this morning.

"You did that?" Temple gasped. "You blasted the oil fields?"

The question was unnecessary. One look at the grin scientist-priest's face convinced him that the Lemurians did indeed have some strange ray machine capable of denotating the gas and oil deposits beneath the earth.

Temple thought quickly. The priest was off guard at the moment. He'd never expect a man with his hands tied behind him to make trouble. The Lemurians were probably holding him until they blew up the coastal area like a gigantic earthquake so that the sea would rush in as far as the Rockies.

Suddenly he walked toward the un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suspecting giant. When almost facing him, Temple brought up his knee sharply, jamming it with sudden force into the Lemurian's midriff. The big man bent double, gasping in agony for wind. Abruptly, in perfect timing, Temple cracked his other knee upward, banging the priest's jaw as he bent forward.

A grunt of pain echoed in the room as the priest doubled up and crumpled to the floor, unconscious. Instantaneously, Temple leaped to his side, and after some difficulty secured the priest's long bladed knife. It was but a moment's work to slit the cords holding his wrists.

"Now, to bust up their ray machine," he muttered grimly as he shoved the knife in his belt.

FRANTICALLY, he searched among the various, strange bits of apparatus in the chamber for something that he might identify as a ray machine. A sinking sensation filled him for if that machine was in the room he couldn't recognize it. And it would take him an hour to wreck all the apparatus there.

He might risk being found, when smashing the machinery, and then discover that it had been hidden in some other place.

"I'll have to get out of here," he decided finally. "If I can get away fast enough, maybe I can warn the army post at Phoenix in time for them to send a parachute squad down here with tommy-guns before the fireworks start."

He slipped off his shoes, gripped the priest's knife firmly and stepped into the corridor leading from the building he had been held in. Without shoes, he moved with pantherish silence, dodging from one doorway to another, keeping out of sight as much as possible.

Then he stopped suddenly, his eyes fastened upon a tall guard who stood at the gateway to the valley.

Measuring the distance between himself and the Lemurian, he knew he couldn't take the man by surprise. But there were other tactics. Tossing pebbles against a building on the opposite side of the Lemurian, he guided the man's attention until he could crawl up behind him.

Gritting his teeth, praying fervently, he crawled along the opposite wall until he was opposite the unwary Lemurian. He hugged the shadows. One false move, a single slip would bring the man around with a challenging cry.

He didn't even dare slip the knife in the guard's back, for a choking gasp would give alarm to the entire pyramid city.

In another second he had passed the giant. Twenty feet more and he dodged behind the cover of the city wall. Taking in a deep breath of relief, he ran across the flat valley toward the stalled Douglas.

He had one chance in a thousand to get away before the Lemurians discovered he was missing. That chance was to find the conk in his plane motor. Without pausing for breath, he uncowled the engine and feverishly examined the wiring.

"If anything is broken, it's there," he muttered. "Yeah, here it is!"

A thrill of victory surged through his body as his fingers rewired the faulty spark. It was but a second's work. He'd be off the ground in another moment.

He slammed the metal cowling shut, snapped the safety bolt, then ran around to the cabin.

Suddenly he stopped! A weird cry came across the valley, reverberating against the mountain walls. It sent an electric chill tingling down his spine. A dozen Lemurians raced across the sand toward the plane.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE sight of the giant men rapidly approaching, spurred Temple to action.

He clambered into the plane. His fingers hastily cut in the switch and compression starter. The abrupt roar of the motor was music in his ears.

The motor gunned to a thunderous roar. The tail elevators depressed as the plane taxied a half circle to get the full run of the field. Then abruptly, Temple eased the joystick back and sent the plane roaring toward the Lemurians. Ten yards, five yards—the giant men dropped to the ground in confusion.

A grim smile flickered in the corners of Temple's taut mouth. His eyes swept from his dials to the wall of mountain directly ahead.

"I'm gonna make it! I've *gotta* make it!" he repeated grimly.

The sweat broke upon his forehead again as he jockeyed his ship over the dangerous peaks and sent her into a difficult, spiral climb. "Something tells me I've got to do something quick," he thought as the plane sailed above the valley. "Calling the army isn't gonna help. That Lemurian ray machine might not wait . . ."

Suddenly he snapped his fingers. "My God!" he gasped. "The nitro!"

Hastily, he set the automatic pilot and climbed back into the cabin and set about slashing the leather moorings that held the nitro-glycerin cases. It was ticklish work. The slightest bump . . . and blooey!

Again he re-set the automatic pilot, directing the plane's course exactly over the valley. With utmost care he gingerly eased one of the cases into the floor chute. He let go.

The nitro package plummeted earthward. A moment later a second case, a third, and then the last case shot through the floor of the plane.

INSTANTANEOUSLY, Temple leaped into the pilot seat, grabbing the control stick with both hands and jamming his heels against the rudder controls. A tremendous roar came from below. The plane shot skyward, buffeted and wracked by an upward blast of wind.

In the valley below all hell broke loose. Livid flame spurted across the valley in four successive blasts. The mountains seemed to crack wide open, spewing their boulders into the sky, sending gigantic walls of rock caving upon the valley, throwing up tons of swirling, wind blasted dust.

The entire crest of a mountain slid into the valley, engulfing and smashing the pyramid city of the Lemurians as if it were a toy stage setting in Hollywood.

Smaller rocks *zzinnged* past Temple's plane as if they were shot from an anti-aircraft cannon. The plane bucked like a wild mustang.

Gradually, the Douglas was brought under control and Temple was able to relax in his seat. "Boy, I did that just like a regular professional volcano," he sighed. "Better get in touch with Phoenix so they won't get worried about a load of nitro wandering through the Southwest."

He switched on his radio. It was working again. He picked up the hand microphone. "Jack Temple calling Phoenix . . . Temple calling Southwest Airlines . . ." he called into the mic.

"Phoenix Airport," a voice answered in the earphones. "Okay, come in, Temple. What's happened?"

"Got lost," Temple replied drily.

"There's an order here for you, Temple," the airport radio flashed. "Return to Globe City with the nitro. It's no longer needed in California. The explosion that blew up the Signal Hill nitro dump put out the oil well fires at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same time. The news just came through."

"What!" Temple shouted.

"Return to Globe City, Temple," the voice repeated.

Temple hooked up his microphone with a sad shake of his head. Sure! Go back home! That was easy. But how was he going to explain the loss of his cargo of nitro glycerin? Who the devil would believe him if he said that he had dumped it on a valley full of Lemurian giants?

He had visions of being docked more than a couple of months in pay because of that nitro. He shrugged his shoulders half heartedly as he swung the plane's nose back toward Globe City. "Well, so what, Jackie?" he laughed drily. "You had a lot of fun while it lasted and you'll probably have a couple of nightmares remembering it."

(Continued from page 68

coils of the instrument on the table. The relays of the electromagnet clicked softly.

Lewis stepped before the instrument, poised his finger over the key that would send current leaping through the tube. A ravening sphere of super-radiation would burst from the crystal and bubble over the earth in a split second. In that same split second, every other crystal of carborundum in the world would dissolve into explosive radiation.

He moved his finger closer to the key. The hair on the nape of his neck stiffened. Weird, incredible moment. Human lives sacrificed—and saved—at the touch of his finger.

Fate and Dr. Henry Lewis stood face to face.

Then his finger jabbed firmly down on the key. He saw nothing of the supernally brilliant globe of radiant fire that burst from the tube and touched off similar globes of force all over earth.

END

Poems Needed
FOR SONGS & RECORDS

PUBLISHING CONTRACT guaranteed on selected material. Send your best poems or songs for **FREE** evaluation to: **HOLLYWOOD SONGWRITERS SERVICE, Dept. U-15, 6253 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 1117, Hollywood, Calif. 90028 (Corner Hollywood & Vine)**

POEMS NEEDED
FOR SONGS
★ TO BE SET TO MUSIC ★
All types for songs & recordings. *Records.* Send poems for **FREE EXAMINATION.**
ASCOT MUSIC INC. • Studio U-5
5904 Sunset Blvd., H'y'd, Cal. 90028

SPECIAL POSTER SALE-½ Price (reduced from $2 to $1), **12 full color posters** reproduced from original covers AMAZING & FANTASTIC from early 30's, 40's, & 50's. $1 each plus 50¢ post. Ultimate Pub. Co. Box 7, Flushing, N.Y. 11364.

Free WITCHCRAFT COURSES
Learn the theory and practice of WITCHCRAFT. Obtain serenity and fulfillment Send $1.00 for Serenity Guide, protective pentacle and course information. Write to
School of Wicca
P. O. Box 693 St Charles, Mo. 63301

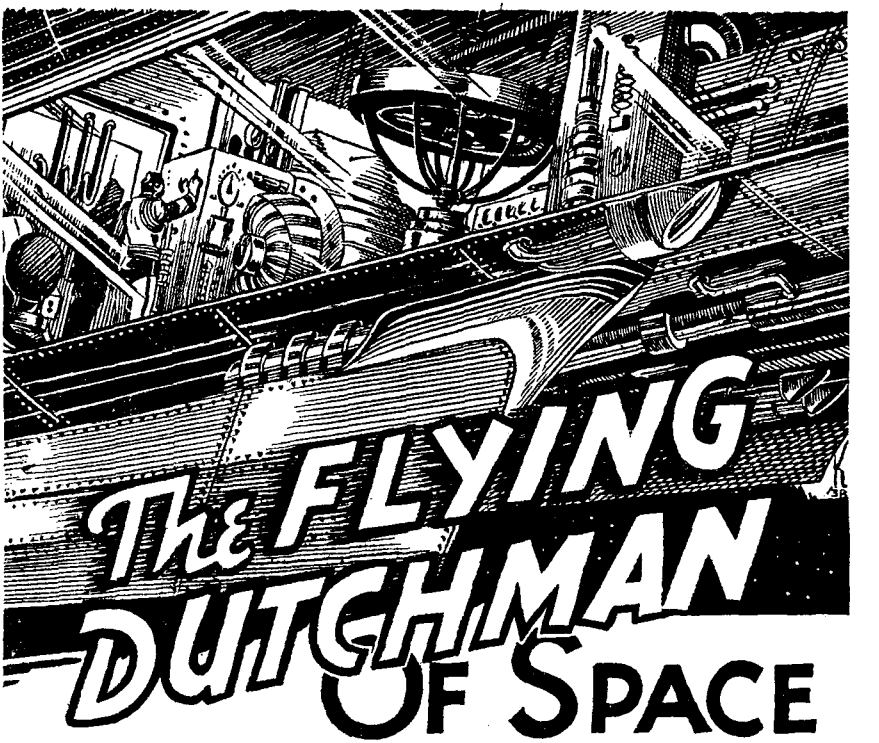
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By
FREDERIC ARNOLD KUMMER JR.

Into space he drifted, a tiny mote lost in infinity, to be snatched from death by a weird ghostly derelict of the void

Illustration by Julian S. Krupa

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The FLYING DUTCHMAN OF SPACE

CHAPTER I

Cast Adrift

THE forecastle of the *Vestric* was dim, sombre, in the feeble light of a single thorium bulb. Blind shadows groped their way across the metal walls, obscured the faces of the men lying in the bunks. From the liner's main ballroom on the deck below came the faint tinkle of music, soft, dreamy.

Jan Herrick, staring moodily at the rivet-studded bulkhead of the forecastle, hummed the air in a low, nostalgic baritone.

"Moons over Mars, glittering stars,
Waters whisper in the Main Canal,
Dusty red plain, unknown to rain,
Where . . ."

"Bah!" Balt, the leathery, grizzled boatswain, sat up, swung his legs over the side of the bunk. "So it's crooners they're signing these days instead of A. B.'s! You'd sing a different tune, my lad, if you'd seen some of the things I've faced!"

"Space serpents, I suppose," Jan grinned. "Or maybe Flying Dutchmen."

"Aye, laugh!" The old man's voice fell into a hoarse whisper. "Laugh, since you know no better! Space serpents I've seen, once off Jupiter and once on the route to Pluto, great bat-like things with blood red eyes and bodies twice the length of this ship! And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aboard the same vessel, the old *Philos*, I've seen . . . the Faces!"

"The Faces?" a brawny engineer repeated, "Who . . . or what . . .?"

Balt pursed his lips, shot a stream of blue Jovian *teel* into the sand-box.

"White, pinched little faces," he said soberly, "like . . . like dead children, only their eyes are old as time. Outside the portholes you'll see them, beggin' piteous-like to be let in." The boatswain shuddered and, with the two remaining fingers of his right hand, wiped sweat from his forehead. All eyes turned automatically toward the glass-ex porthole; only the familiar blue-black sky, stippled with brilliant stars, met their gaze.

A scornful laugh issued from Jan Herrick's bunk. He stretched his long, lean frame, brushed back his dark hair.

"You fellows believe that?" he demanded.

"Waal," one of the ordinaries, a drawling Venusian, shook his head, "you know the first maxim of space—'Anything can happen'. An' Bill Jensen, navigator of the *Goshawk*, swears he saw the Flyin' Dutchman one night not far from where we are now. Passed right close to it, he said. An old, old ship, battered and worn, doomed to drift forever in space. The crew are damned spirits who know no rest. Mortal bad luck even to lay eyes upon the Dutchman, so they say."

"Aye." Balt nodded ominously, the shadows flickering over his scarred face. "A vessel of death, piloted by dead men!"

"Of all the superstitious dopes," Jan yawned, "you guys . . ."

A quick shudder shook the *Vestric;* she staggered, plunged forward once more. The men in the forecastle, half-dressed, were racing along the corridor when the general alarm sounded.

Jan climbed the iron ladder to the boat-deck, took up his station beside life-car number three. The *Vestric,* her progress unimpeded, seemed to be in no danger. Jan, thinking of his warm berth in the forecastle, swore softly. Ten cold, dragging minutes passed. Ahead, at car number one, he could hear Balt muttering something about "crooners and softies, not a real spacehand in the lot." Jan set his jaw grimly. He'd show that superstitious old fool! If he only had a chance to prove what he could do!

All at once Miles, the first officer, stepped out onto the boat-deck.

"No danger, men," he said crisply. "A small meteorite was somehow missed by our detectors, and buckled a few plates in the hull over the gymnasium. I have isolated the room by closing the air-tight doors. However, Captain Hale does not wish to inconvenience our passengers by depriving them of the use of the gym. If one of you will volunteer to make repairs . . ."

"I will." Jan stepped forward eagerly.

"Very good." The first officer nodded. "Get your space suit. You'll need a magnetic grapple and welding torch."

"Aye, aye, sir." Jan saluted, made his way toward the supply room.

Five minutes later he was ready. The bulky space suit hung limply over his spare frame, and the magnetic grapple, fastened by a long steel cord to his waist, dangled from his hand, its current as yet not turned on. In the other hand he held a small but powerful welding torch.

Jan was just approaching the air-lock when old Balt stepped up to him, eyes grave.

"Be careful, lad," he warned. "The torch recoil . . ."

"I know what I'm doing," Jan said coldly, snapping the heavy helmet into place. And as Balt tried to restrain him,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he shook off the boatswain's arm, stepped forward into the air-lock.

As soon as the inner door of the lock clanged shut, Jan turned to the outer one, drew it open. The rush of escaping air swept him forward to the entrance, forcing him to hang on tightly for an instant. Then, very carefully, he swung the grapple out and against the ship's hull, switching on the current as he did so. Highly magnetized, it clung tightly to the ship's outer shell.

Jan pulled himself forward, hand over hand, along the thin steel cord. Reaching the grapple, he snapped off the current, threw it ahead once more, and recommenced his progress, inching his way toward the stern.

The *Vestric*, at an oblique angle, was receiving the sun's rays on her under side. As a result, Jan was in total darkness, forced to use the gleaming searchlight mounted on his helmet. He swung his head slowly from side to side, looking for the broken plate. All at once he saw it, a large dent perhaps two feet square. And in the centre of the depression was the hole through which the air had escaped, a tiny crack only a few inches in length.

Jan nodded, grinning. The repair job promised to be easy. Fingers clumsy in their thick covering, he drew a short bar of steel from his capacious pocket, held it over the crack. Then, pointing the tip of the torch at the bar, he pressed the release.

Jan was not prepared for what followed. The recoil of the torch shot him away as far as the steel cord would permit, leaving him to dangle aloft like some ancient captive balloon. A sudden, unreasoning panic swept over him; he thrashed about wildly, jerking and twisting in an effort to seize the cord, pull himself back to the ship. All at once a sick feeling gripped Jan's stomach. The *Vestric* was no longer beneath him!

Frantically he glanced about. Stars, the black void, the great flame-rimmed circle of the sun . . . and nothing more! He was marooned in the limitless sea of space! A castaway!

A wave of fierce heat, penetrating even the asbestoid space suit, seared Jan's leg. The welding torch . . . still flaring! Hastily he snapped it off . . . and as he did so, the explanation of his predicament became suddenly crystal-clear. In thrashing about so excitedly after the torch's recoil had lifted him from the *Vestric's* hull, the small blue flame had touched the steel cord, melted it like butter, and cast him adrift.

Of course, his speed was still that of the ship, roughly a thousand miles a minute, but the torch's reaction had thrown him off at a tangent, so that he and the *Vestric* were diverging at a constant speed along opposite legs of a great triangle. Old Balt's warning words crossed his mind. If only he hadn't been so pig-headed as to disregard them!

Jan squared his shoulders. No use worrying himself with regrets. Better to figure up his resources, find out what chance he had. First air . . . that was the most important item. He glanced at the pressure gauge strapped to his wrist. Four hour's supply . . . under active working conditions. But here, motionless in space, he might require less. The absence of gravity would help, too, lessen the strain on the heart.

Jan reached up, twisted the valve until it was only half open. For the next few minutes he experienced a choking, strangled sensation, had to fight hard to keep from opening the valve to its full extent once more. Gradually, as his metabolism slowed down to a more sluggish tempo, he fell into a state of dreamy lassitude. It seemed to take hours, mighty efforts, to make the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slightest movement, but beyond that he was not greatly inconvenienced.

The air supply adjusted, Jan examined the contents of the space suit's emergency pocket. Tools for repair work, patching equipment for possible tears in the asbestoid, and several big *radite* flares.

For a moment he considered igniting one of the signal lights, then decided against it. Better to save them in case he sighted a ship. Not that it was likely. His absence from the *Vestric* would not be discovered for at least a half hour, by which time the liner would be many thousands of miles away. Impossible for them to find him, for he, traveling at a similar speed in some unknown direction might be anywhere within a sphere of a hundred thousand miles diameter. It was hardly possible that they would even trouble to make a search.

Jan shook his head disconsolately. There seemed little to look forward to. The asteroids, gleaming brightly ahead, could not be reached in eighty hours, let alone the eight he counted on. And even if by a miracle he *did* reach land of some sort, it would mean only a crashing collision. To fall, unchecked, upon a planet or satellite . . .! Jan laughed harshly.

Eight hours to live and he would be forced to spend them drifting in space!

For some moments he lay back, stared at the purple sky. Then, drowsy from the reduced oxygen, the warm rays of the sun upon his back, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

The Derelict in Space

IT was the click of the escape valve, loud in the hollow space helmet, that awoke Jan. Nor was his a particularly happy awakening; that sharp click indicated that a stream of used air no longer pushed open the butterfly valve. Which in turn indicated that oxygen was not entering from the tank to force the foul air out.

Jan reached up, opened the intake wide. A few stray wisps of oxygen entered the helmet. He shook his head, grinning. Eight hours to live and he had spent them sleeping! Still, it was the most pleasant way possible, under the circumstances.

Jan glanced about. He was near . . . near in space reckoning . . . to one of the little asteroid worlds. Under half a million miles, he figured. Not that it mattered when . . .

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he saw something that made his heart leap. A long, cylindrical object, gleaming dully in the sunlight. A ship! A ship whose grey hull stood out in sharp relief against the black background of the void!

With a frenzied wrench Jan managed to turn himself around. The ship was extremely close, not more than ten miles away. More, its speed must have been approximately the same as his own, since he was overtaking it slowly. No mirage, no delirium, this ship! It was a real, material object.

His hand trembling, he reached for the flares. Then, realizing the futility of using them on this sun side of the ship, he thrust them back in his pocket. As well try to signal with a flashlight on the sun-swept deserts of Mars. Jan frowned. At his present rate of speed he would overtake the ship in about ten minutes, pass it on a parallel route several miles off its port bow. Unless someone aboard were to happen to notice him. . . .

All at once Jan thought of the welding torch floating beside him. Using its recoil he might be able to change his course, approach the ship at an angle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jan aimed the torch carefully, pressed the release. A jet of blue flame shot from its nozzle and the space ship seemed to veer around to a position more nearly in front of him. Another jet of flame, and another. Now he had only to sit tight for a few minutes until he came alongside of the vessel, then attract attention by pounding on the portholes. . . .

Jan took a deep breath. The air in the space suit was rapidly growing foul. It would last only a few more minutes at the most. Still, that would be time enough to board the ship unless . . . unless. . . . His eyes, fixed on the vessel, narrowed

There was something about her that seemed, well, sort of peculiar. Her design, for instance. Archaic, ungainly, as compared to the sleek modern liners. Ancient single-jet rocket tubes and curiously old-fashioned wind-vanes. The sight of that dingy grey hull against the dark, desolate sky filled Jan with a feeling of awe; indistinct shadows of recollection, dim, age-old memories, crawled through his mind. Suddenly he was thinking of Balt's ominous words: "A vessel of death . . . piloted by dead men!"

Jan laughed, weakly. Nerves and the lack of oxygen . . . that was all. Merely some battered old tramp. . . . Even as he tried to dispel his fears, that feeling of deep, intangible horror clutched with icy fingers at his heart once more! The ship was weird, somehow unclean.

He was near the vessel now, approaching it slowly. Its speed was only a few miles per hour less than his own. Jan could see that the hull was thick with cosmic dust, dented and bent from a thousand meteorite storms.

A cautious blast of the welding torch brought him alongside one of the big round portholes. The cabin inside, lit by pale sunlight, was empty. Jan beat upon the windows with a frenzy of desperation. His lungs were bursting, his heart throbbing frantically. Flying Dutchman or hell-ship, it made no difference. Air . . . that was the only thing that mattered. He shouted wildly, uselessly, filling the helmet with noise.

Now he was passing the massive outer door of the main air-lock. The crude handle, guarded by a semi-circular wind shield, caught his eye. Jan reached out blindly, tugged at it. The door, unlocked, swung open. Scarcely able to believe his good fortune, Jan climbed into the air-lock, pulled the heavy door shut behind him. Staggering weakly, he snapped on his flashlight, examined the inner door. It was locked, securely. Jan groaned. Was he to die here, within the air-lock of a space ship, separated from air by only a half inch of steel?

Suddenly his gaze fell upon the torch, still clutched automatically in his fingers. Gasping, choking, he lit it, placed the tip against the lock of the door, keeping himself erect by a mighty effort of will as the flame bit into the steel. At length, just as everything was beginning to blur into unconsciousness, the door, its catch melted, swung open. Jan snapped back the heavy helmet, slumped to the floor.

For perhaps five minutes he lay there, gulping in the cool, clean air. He was still a trifle unsteady as he lurched to his feet, stepped into the corridor. The mustiness of age hung like a pall over the passage. It's rust-flaked walls were black with the grime of years; the sound of his own breathing seemed, to Jan, unaccountably loud. The nameless horror that he had sensed outside the ship was now magnified a thousand times. Frowning uneasily, he started to walk along the companionway, then froze into stiff immobility. Slow, shuffling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

footsteps, coming nearer and nearer!

Suddenly, Jan was aware of something moving toward him through the gloom of the corridor. Something that crawled slitheringly along the floor, dragging a limp, distorted body. Rooted with horror, Jan could not move.

The Thing crept nearer. He could see a flat embryonic face, vaguely human. Through a tangle of matted hair tiny red eyes burned, and the crooked mouth, sagging open, revealed sharp, fang-like teeth. Huge, gnarled hands pulled It along; Jan could hear the long nails clicking like the claws of a beast upon the iron floor.

With the swiftness of a striking snake the crawling creature leaped, toppling Jan to the floor. A horror-packed, bubbling scream burst from the spaceman's lips, quickly stifled by the powerful hands that locked about his throat. His efforts to free himself were futile under the weight of numbers. Hot, fetid breath fanned his face; sharp claws tore at his cheeks. He could hear the drip-drip of his own blood upon the floor, then, more horrible still, a greedy gulping sound as one of the grey things lapped it up.

The cruel fingers tightened about his throat; he was just sinking into unconsciousness when he heard the sharp crack of a whip, a woman's voice, ringing sweet and clear along the corridor.

The heavy weight lifted from Jan's chest; there was a scurrying sound, the patter of feet, then silence. Groggily, he climbed to his feet, glanced about. Facing him was a girl, slim, pale, exotic. Her dark hair hung free about her shoulders, a soft background to her vivid cheeks, her scarlet lips. She wore a man's shirt and pants, held a long strip of leather in her hand.

"Who . . . who are you?" she whispered. "Is there a ship . . . at last?"

"No." Jan shook his head "I'm just a castaway. Fell off my own ship, managed to reach this one."

"Oh!" There was sharp disappointment in the girl's eyes. "I had hoped at last to see the outside worlds and . . ." She broke off, noticing the blood on Jan's face. "You're hurt! Come . . . I'll bandage it."

Still somewhat dazed, Jan followed the girl along the companionway to a cabin adjoining the control room. Bright, clean, tidy, it offered a marked contrast to the rest of the ship.

"Sit down." The girl motioned to the bunk. "I'll get water, bandages." Quickly, deftly, she dressed the wound.

"Thanks," Jan smiled. "And now maybe you'll tell me who you are and what all this means."

"Me?" the girl muttered. "Why I'm Sandra . . . Sandra Flane. And this is the Martian freighter *Ella B.*"

"And those . . . those things outside?"

"They are . . . or w e r e . . . the crew." The girl's dark eyes were sad. "They're mad. Insane. Space madness. Cooped up aboard this ship for twenty years . . ."

"Twenty years!" Jan cried. "Good God! No wonder they've gone crazy! But you . . ."

"I was raised aboard. Don't remember anything else. This life is natural to me. You see, about twenty years ago the *Ella B,* a very old vessel even then, was commissioned to take a cargo of supplies to Venus. My father, Captain Flane, was in command, and since my mother had died a short time before, he was forced to take me along, although I was then only about two years old.

"Driven off our course by meteor storms, we approached the asteroid belt. And then, without warning, the fuel tanks exploded.

"I, of course, can't remember all this,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but Dad told me about it afterwards. Only a miracle prevented the ship from being blown to bits. As it was, the engine room was completely wrecked and the hull breached in several places.

"The crew worked like trojans to repair the leaky plates and managed at last to make the ship air-tight But when we tried to radio for help, we discovered that a nearby asteroid, apparently of some radio-active substance, completely blanketed our messages. Our position appeared hopeless. No fuel, no way to call for help, several of the crew killed and many, like poor Hult who attacked you just now, permanently crippled. We still had our forward momentum, of course, but instead of going on into space we fell under the gravitational pull of the radio-active asteroid.

"Months passed without any sign of a rescue ship. Indeed, any vessel sighting us would have no reason to stop, since we had no means of signalling that we were in distress, with our radio blanketed by the electrical disturbance."

"But food!" Jan exclaimed. "What have you done all these years?"

"I'm coming to that," the girl said quietly. "You see, as our position became clear to Dad, he spent his time trying to find some means of prolonging life aboard this ship. So, utilizing the only possible source of energy, he constructed reflectors, solar energy machines, from the remains of our engines. These, while furnishing not a fraction of enough energy to move the ship, were ample to run the air-conditioning unit.

"But with the problem of an air supply overcome, food and drink presented a more serious one. The ship was stocked for six months, but Dad realized that if we were not rescued at the end of that time, we would starve.

"He had always been an excellent chemist and so, with nothing else to do, he tackled a seemingly impossible task . . . the construction of what he jokingly called 'the mechanical vegetable.' He pointed out that there were aboard all the necessary chemicals, as well as water, and an unlimited supply of sunshine. On the planets, he reasoned, vegetables and fruit utilize these factors to produce an edible substance. It was simply a case of copying the plants and purifying, revitalizing, waste products by means of the sun's energy. None of the chemicals would leave the ship; they would merely be transformed. Dad's apparatus was really quite simple."

"Simple!" Jan repeated. "I don't see . . ."

"Surely." Sandra Flane nodded. "Take, for instance, the unit attached to the air conditioner. Foul air, consisting of carbon dioxide and water, is passed over a catalyst, and, with the aid of solar energy, broken down into water, oxygen, and sugar or starch, as desired.* And the other units work similarly to the one on the air conditioner. So by the application of a simple chemical process Dad solved the problem of food and water."

"Time," Sandra continued, "dragged along. Months, years. Dad taught me all he knew, how to operate the food and water machines. Then, slowly, the men began to go mad. Little eccentricities at first, growing more and more violent as time passed. Even Dad was beginning to show signs of a break-down when, about five years ago, he died. I alone, raised in this environment, was able to retain my reason.

"Now, since I am the only one who can operate the machines, feed them, the men permit me to live . . . but

* This accomplishment of Sandra's father is not at all illogical. For instance, the formula for sugar is Energy + $6CO_2$ + $6H_2O$ ⇄ $C_6H_{12}O_6$ + $6O_2$. And similarly, many other things might be synthesized.—Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they are growing worse every day. Sooner or later they will forget that I control their supply of food. And then . . ." The girl's eyes were dark pools of fear. "If only there were some way to escape . . .!"

"Perhaps we can," Jan said thoughtfully, "if we can get beyond the field of these electrical disturbances, use our radio to . . ."

A patter of feet, a series of animal-like grunts, sounded beyond the door.

"The men!" Sandra snatched up her whip. "It's meal time! You'd better stay close to me!"

She opened the door, stepped into the passageway. Grey, gibbering creatures, their insane eyes glittering, cringed fawningly at sight of her, although shooting an occasional sullen glance at Jan. Sandra took his arm, led him down a flight of rusty steps to the huge engine room below. Tittering with shrill senseless laughter, the madmen followed.

The engine room offered mute proof of the explosion which had wrecked the *Ella B*. Twisted stanchions, blackened walls, and a litter of corroded metal heaped in the corners. The solar energy machines, however, lined up before the large quartz observation ports, gave a note of encouragement to the otherwise desolate scene. Burnished metal reflectors, focusing the sun's rays, supplied heat for a small steam turbine; crude vats, retorts, and distilling apparatus, bubbled and hissed.

Sandra, checking several dials and gauges, pulled a brass lever. A small chute swung down and a stream of blue-grey powder poured into a large cauldron. The girl turned a spigot, and pure, sparkling water jetted into the container.

The grey misshapen creatures moved forward eagerly, licking their lips, drooling. Sandra stirred the mixture into a thick gruel, ladled it out onto dishes. The men wolfed the food ravenously, lapping up spilled portions from the floor, fighting over the remains in the vat. When at last they had finished this savage repast, they slunk away, one or two at a time, to the main deck above.

"Horrible!" Jan shook his head, shuddering.

"Beasts!" the girl murmured. "With beasts' cunning! Always lying in wait, hiding about in strange places! And the *Ella B*, a peaceful trader, carried no weapons! Soon now they will strike . . . and we will be helpless! Oh, if only we could get away!"

"Away?" Jan repeated, crossing the room. "Why . . . look here! The firing chamber and rocket tubes aren't damaged. Now as I see it, this ship is spinning about the little asteroid like a stone being whirled about on the end of a string. The string being, of course, gravitational pull. In such a state of delicate balance one small blast from the rockets would cut the string, send us off at a tangent into space! And once free of the asteroid's field, we can use the radio to call for help!"

"True." Sandra nodded. "But where can we get fuel for the rockets . . . even enough to produce the small initial blast needed?"

"Here!" Jan pointed to the scraps of rusty iron. "And here!" He waved toward the aluminum partitions. "The old thermite process! Fine aluminum particles, mingled with iron oxide, will unite if ignited by a hot flame! Unite with a terrific heat! Cylinders of water, packed in the oxide-aluminum mixture, would be instantly transformed by the tremendous heat into vapor, explode with enough violence to disturb our state of equilibrium, send us, like a stone from a sling, off into space free of the orbit."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER III

A Desperate Battle for Life

THE weeks that followed were a tremendous cycle of toil for Jan and Sandra. The solar engine, harnessed to a circular saw, yielded a slow but steady stream of aluminum dust; the results of a whole day's work, poured into the huge firing chamber, seemed ridiculously insignificant. Even more difficult was the chipping of iron oxide, rust, from the ship's walls and floor. The radio set to be overhauled, the drums of water to be sealed, packed in the rocket tubes, the food to be prepared . . . they labored frantically, tirelessly.

And always the mad monsters that had been the crew kept watch upon them, screaming with demonical laughter, whispering hoarsely among themselves, creeping softly about like horrible, grotesque shadows. Life, to Jan, became a feverish nightmare, a nightmare haunted by red, glowing eyes, grotesque inhuman faces, and long sharp nails that scrabbled like claws upon the metal floors.

It was a full month before the rockets were ready. The great firing chamber, filled to the brim with aluminum dust and iron oxide, was securely closed. A half dozen water "bombs" were placed in the rocket tubes, surrounded by the greyish mixture. Jan's hand shook as he turned the big solar reflectors, concentrating their beams on a single small point of the firing chamber. Slowly the spot on the thick outer casing began to glow red. Jan glanced at Sandra, white, hollow-eyed, standing by the ladder. From the deck above came a babble of incoherent conversation, angry growling.

Jan's gaze swung once more to the huge firing chamber. At that moment a thunderous roar filled the room! Another and another, six shattering blasts! The ship, caught in the grip of mighty forces, lurched sickeningly, sent him spinning to the floor. Then, abruptly, silence, utter blackness.

Dazedly Jan picked himself up, helped Sandra to her feet.

"Oh!" the girl whispered. "I . . . I can't see . . .!"

"It's all right!" Jan's voice was strong with triumph. "The sun is on the other side now! Look!" He pointed toward the big port holes. Below, and a trifle behind them, was the little asteroid, already perceptibly smaller. "We're free, Sandra! Free!"

"Oh . . . Jan!" she murmured. "Then I'll see all those things that Dad told me about. Green fields, rivers, cities! Thanks to you . . ."

Jan's arm encircled her shoulders.

"God willing," he said soberly.

Two days passed before they could move the solar engines to the other side of the ship. The crew, deprived of their food, roamed the passageways like lean, hungry wolves, ominous, menacing. As soon as the machines had been connected and the men fed, Jan diverted the power to the small generators that supplied the radio.

Sandra, her eyes eager, hung over his shoulder as he snapped on the switch of the receiving set. Instead of the continous crackle and sputter of interference there was silence, then, very faintly, the voice of a distant operator, giving a routine weather forecast.

"Clear! Clear of the asteroid's blanket!" Jan's voice trembled as he turned on the transmitting unit. "S.O.S.! S.O.S.! Freighter *Ella B.* calling for immediate assistance! Position 94 degrees, 10 minutes, 32 seconds sidereal lineation, zone 1047, sector 14A! Repeating, 94 degrees . . ."

"Jan! Think of it!" Sandra exclaimed. "People . . . sane people . . . to talk to! Comforts, luxuries, freedom! And medical attention, a good

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sanatorium for the poor fellows of the crew! Perhaps they . . ."

A low growl sounded from the companionway outside. Jan glanced up, frowning. Hult dragged his twisted body into the control room; the madman's flaccid lips were flecked with foam, his face distorted with rage. Behind him were the others, wild-eyed, terrible, grey ghouls of hell.

"I heard her!" Hult screamed. "Sanatorium, she said! They want to take us back to Mars, imprison us! Place us behind bars! But we'll kill them before they can get help! Kill! Kill!"

Jan had barely time to leap to his feet before they were upon him, shrieking, howling. Long nails clawed his cheeks, rabid teeth tore at his flesh. He gasped and struck down two frantic creatures who flung themselves upon him, mewling and slobbering. Near the door he could see Sandra, swinging her whip desperately. The raving men were making no effort to avoid the lash, surging forward until they fell, stunned or blinded by her blows.

Jan fought his way toward the girl, striking out with both hands, forcing a path through the tangle of legs, arms, and bodies. Blazing wolfish eyes, broken black teeth, skinny, talon-like hands, swirling about in a human maelstrom. He had covered half the distance to the door when something struck him from behind, bore him to the floor. Then evil-smelling bodies were piling over him, tearing at his clothes, his flesh, battering his face with wild, berserk rage.

Time for one shout to Sandra, he had, before his breath was imprisoned in his chest and dacing lights began to flash before his eyes. An all-enveloping darkness was sweeping over him when he heard the heavy thudding of the whip and the merciless grip upon his windpipe relaxed.

"Jan! Jan!" It was Sandra's voice, gasping, terror-struck.

Dazedly he staggered to his feet. The madmen, swept back by the girl's fierce attack, crouched on the other side of the room, gathering strength for another effort. Hult, his long arms dangling apishly, his face cut by the lash, was muttering thickly, drunkenly. "Blood . . . blood! Kill!"

"This way! Quickly!" Sandra clutched Jan's hand, drew him along the corridor.

Feet pounding on the metal floor, they dashed toward the freighter's main salon. Behind them gaunt, skeleton-like figures howled in hot pursuit. By a scant second they beat the maniacs to the big room, slammed and bolted the door.

"Safe . . . for a while at least." Sandra sank wearily into a chair, swept back her dark hair. "Perhaps they'll lose interest, when they get hungry . . . allow us to reach the control room, the radio."

"I doubt it." Jan shook his head. "They . . . listen!" In the corridor outside Hult's hoarse voice screamed orders; a moment later there was the clanging of metal as hammers rang upon the light aluminum door.

"It won't hold up five minutes." Jan turned to face the girl. "Looks like the end, Sandra!"

"No!" She crossed the salon, opened a large locker. It was filled with clumsy, old-fashioned space suits. "I've kept these ready, hoping for the day when we would sight a rescue ship."

"Good girl!" Jan climbed hastily into the bulky suit, opened air-valves of the others in the locker. "They might take it into their crazy heads to follow us," he muttered.

A splintering crash echoed through the room. The door, ripped from its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ancient hinges, toppled inward. A mass of frenzied wild-eyed humanity poured across the salon. Seizing Sandra's hand, Jan tore open the small emergency air-lock, slammed it shut, then opened the outer, and sprang into the void.

From that moment on things happened with startling suddenness. The impetus of their leap carried them off at an angle, away from the ship. In a few minutes, diverging from the freighter at constant speed, they were several miles away. Then, as Jan glanced back, something huge and black shot by them. The *Ella B.*, directly in the path of the meteorite, burst into a thousand fragments.

The collision was a sight which, to Jan, seemed almost unbelievable. No sound, no shock, in the airless void. Moreover, the actual break-up of the freighter was fantastic. Some of the fragments of metal, hurled off on the opposite side, disappeared instantly; others, approaching the castaways at approximately their speed, seemed to come apart with incredible slowness, drift gently toward them. A cloud of wreckage, mangled bodies, and chunks of meteoric stone, floated past. One large section of the *Ella B.*'s hull, some twenty feet square, passed within a few feet of Jan. Reaching out, he grasped its edge, pulled himself onto it, dragging Sandra with him.

"Easier for any ship to spot a large piece of wreckage," he said.

The girl, reading his lips through the glassex front of the helmet, nodded. She was pale, trembling, but her eyes were brave. Jan's hand, encased in the heavy space suit, pressed hers; his gaze swept the desolate black void about them for some sign of human life. The air tanks of these archaic suits were good for only two hours. Jan shook his head hopelessly. Two hours . . .

The time passed quickly. It seemed as though only two minutes had elapsed before he heard the warning click of the butterfly valve. He turned to Sandra. Already she was having difficulty in breathing. Her eyes were like cinders . . . cinders set in dirty snow. Jan glanced about, but the steamy moisture on the inside of the old-fashioned helmet blurred everything. He choked, gasping to fill his bursting lungs. All at once he seemed to be falling, falling into dark nothingness.

The first thing that Jan saw on opening his eyes was Balt' scarred, leathery countenance. And beside him, Miles, others of the *Vestric's* crew.

"Balt!" Jan muttered. "Then . . . then it was all a . . . a dream?"

"Dream?" The old man chuckled. "People don't bring their dreams back with them!" He stepped aside and Jan could see Sandra, on a cot across the sick bay, smiling wanly at him. "Aye," the boatswain went on, " 'tis past belief! We lose you on our outgoing trip, find you on our return! An S.O.S. call brought us here at full speed, and we picked up you two off a bit of wreckage. The lass yonder has told us where you've been." Balt wagged his grizzled head. "D'you still think I'm a superstitious old fool, lad, when I speak of Flying Dutchmen?"

Jan gripped the boatswain's gnarled hand.

"I was the fool, Balt. Pig-headed and stupid. I know now you were right when you said anything was possible in space." And his eyes, very tender, turned to Sandra once more.

Old Balt's seamed, weather-beaten face broke into a wide grin.

"Saw a comet pass across our bow last night," he announced. "Sure sign of a wedding!"

THE END

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DICTAGRAPHS OF DEATH

by

P. F. COSTELLO

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MY City Editor and two copy boys were breathing down my neck by the time I pounded out the last line of the story. I ripped the page from the typewriter, tossed it on the desk, and then leaned back in my chair and watched Joe Kirkland—the toughest editor in Manhattan—rake his eyes over the copy before shoving it at one of the nervous copy trotters.

"Move!" he snapped, and I knew the copy was good. It had to be good to get by Joe without revision.

"I'm going to be gone about two days," I said.

"Now don't be that way, Jim," Joe said quickly, "I'm going to need you around here. This is not the time to be starting out on a tear—"

"Nuts," I said, louder than I meant to. "I've worked for twenty-two hours straight on that blamed story and I need a rest. Anyway, nothing's due to break for a while. Professor Engles has been kidnaped, okay. But there won't be anything on the story now until a ransom demand is submitted to his family."

"There may not be any ransom demands," Joe said, fumbling for a smoke. "This is no ordinary snatch job. Professor Engles was working with the Defense Commission on some very important dope. He hasn't a dime of money himself. So why the kidnaping?"

"Okay," I said, "so why?"

"That's what I'm hoping you'll get to work on," Joe said.

"I will," I said.

"Fine—"

"In exactly forty-eight hours from now!" I grabbed my cigarettes from the desk, shoved them into my pocket and stood up.

When Mr. Wu said "Do not meddle," he meant it. But to a reporter, missing scientists and the Defense Program are hot news

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And don't worry about your star reporter," I said reaching for my hat, "because I'm just going to drop in on my girl so she'll remember me when I meet her at the altar one of these days, and then I'm heading for the arms of Morpheus."

"Whose arms?" Joe asked suspiciously.

"Morpheus," I snapped. "The god of sleep, you wouldn't know him."

I left then and I almost made it to the door. But half-way through the reception room the receptionist called me.

"Jim," she said, "there's a gentleman to see you." Her pretty blonde head nodded to the other side of the room where a small Chinese sat watching me expectantly.

"Him?" I asked.

The blonde head nodded again and I sighed. That's one thing about the newspaper business. Every crackpot crank in the world runs to a newspaper when he things he's got a story. I don't know why they pick on me unless it's because I try and be nice to them.

THE little fellow had stood up when I looked at him and I got a better look at him. He was short and slight and wore a cutaway coat and striped trousers. In his hand he carried, very carefully, a black homburg hat. His face was bland and smooth and wreathed in a slightly silly smile and behind large spectacles, bright little almond eyes twinkled at me. He wore a cane too.

I scratched my head and decided to make a very brief interview out of it.

"Did you wish to see me?"

"Are you Mr. James Burke?" This question was accompanied by a deferential little bow that seemed, somehow at odds with the clipped, painfully precise voice and inflection.

"Yes."

He moved closer to me then and looked about carefully.

"I should like very much to talk to you for a minute or maybe two but I should like also to find a somewhat more confidential place than this foyer."

"I'm pretty busy," I said, "and—"

"It is of the gravest importance, Mister Burke," he said solemnly. "Trouble, serious trouble is near and I need your help."

They all do. To start revolutions or to finance a business or something screwy. I took my little chum by the arm and led him to the door that led to the men's washroom. He smiled brightly at me.

"My name is Wu," he said. "Mister Wu."

"Wu, eh?" I repeated. "Gotta nice ring to it. Now you just wait here for a few minutes and I'll be back." I shoved him gently into the gleaming tile washroom and then tiptoed out of the door, and out of the building.

I HAD forgotten all about it a half-hour later when I trotted up the steps of Professor Cartwright's home. I rang the bell and then tried to recall, with the usual poor results, how beautiful Joan Cartwright really was. I was always knocked for a loop when I saw her, but it was fun trying to prepare myself for it.

I rang the bell again and frowned. She might be up in her father's second story laboratory. I didn't particularly like her working with her father because he was just enough of an idealistic scientist to use her for his experiments. I didn't know what he was working on and I didn't care much. All I cared about was Joan.

There was no answer to my second ring and I began to stew. I walked across the spring sod to the front of the house and peered through the window. From the light of floor lamps I could see reflections from leather-backed volumes in the Professor's library. But the Professor's big chair was empty and his pipes were all standing neatly in their racks.

I didn't wait any longer. Calm, thoughtful deliberation is not my strong suit. I wrapped my handkerchief about my fist and then knocked a pane of glass out and crawled into the library. The first floor was quiet and—I knew in a minute—deserted.

"Hello," I yelled, "anybody home?"

I crossed the library, while my shout was still echoing through the house and started up the stairs. The second floor of the house was dark but at the end of the hall I saw a thin pencil of light, close to the floor. I knew the light came from the Professor's laboratory.

Unconsciously I felt my fingers tightening into fists. I started down the hall but before I had taken three steps, the door swung open. I blinked in the sudden light that streamed from the laboratory and then I saw that Joan was standing in the doorway, her face shadowed by the light behind her.

I felt my knees almost sag with relief. Then I grinned sheepishly.

"Any relation to Jim Burke and a second

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

story man is purely coincidental."

She didn't answer, but I could see her lips curve in a smile.

"You had me worried, honey," I said. "Nobody answered the bell and I—" I stopped and stared at her. "Joan," I heard my voice sharp and strained. "What's wrong?"

I couldn't see her face clearly but her body, silhouetted in the light, was swaying slightly as if it were out of control. I grabbed her shoulders and shook her roughly.

"For God's sake, what's the matter?" I yelled.

Her head rolled loosely, limply on her neck but she didn't speak. I half carried and half dragged her into the laboratory and jerked her around to face the light. Her face was blank, expressionless, and her eyes stared into mine without a trace of recognition. I slapped her face hard.

"If this is a joke," I shouted, "it's gone far enough."

One of her hands touched the angry, red spot on her cheek where my hand had struck and a puzzled, babyish expression of hurt and doubt appeared in her eyes.

"Oh God," I groaned. "I didn't mean to hit you."

I led her to a chair and watched her slump back against the cushions, her body limp and unresisting. One of her hands trailed over the arm of the chair and played idly and unconsciously with a tassle that dangled from the arm of the chair.

I jerked my eyes away from her and got a grip on myself again before I looked around the room. The chairs were overturned, the rug was twisted and wrinkled and there were four jagged holes in the floor, as if heavy bolts had been ripped from the planking. I crossed the room to the phone and snapped it to my lips. Then I saw that the wires had been ripped from the bell box.

I dropped the phone and then I noticed an object on the floor next to the Professor's desk. It was a small, leather-bound black book. I picked it up and shuffled through it. It was crammed with formulae, equations and page after page of notes in the Professor's neat, cramped writing. I shoved it into my overcoat pocket and then walked back to Joan and took her hand in mine.

"Darling," I said, trying to keep the frantic anxiety from my voice, "where's your father? Look at me. You've got to try and remember. Think, darling, please. Tell me what's happened."

She stared at me blankly. It was the most terrible sensation I've ever experienced to look at her. It was the girl I loved and yet—it wasn't. The features were the same, but they were devoid of all identity, all character and expression. It was as if a perfectly blank mask had been placed over her delicate, sensitive face.

I remembered the downstairs phone then and in a few seconds I was racing down the steps and into the alcove off the library. I picked up the receiver and in a second heard Central's sweet music—"Number Please?"

"Get an ambulance on its way," I said, and gave the house address. "Then call the police." I slammed the phone back into its cradle and hurried back up the steps. I don't know why but at that moment I was thinking of a funny little Chinese named Mister Wu!

CHAPTER II

Joan Disappears

I WATCHED the tall, white-haired neuro-psychiatrist peer into Joan's eyes and then feel her pulse and shake his head.

"In forty years of clinical research," I heard him mutter, "I've never seen anything like this."

"What is it?" I asked. "You've been taking tests for an hour now." I stared down at Joan's slender figure stretched out on the hospital cot and clenched my fists. "Can you tell me what's wrong with her or can't you?"

"You must relax," the old doctor said gently. "We don't want to have another patient on our hands. Joan's case is unique in the case literature of psychiatry. In some manner her brain has been completely drained. Memory, will, inhibitions, personality . . ." he paused and made a sweeping gesture with his hand, . . . "they've all been swept away."

"How the hell could that happen?" I asked. "Yesterday she was sane as you or me. Maybe more so."

"It isn't the question of sanity," the doctor returned wearily. "She's perfectly sane and normal, just as a two week old baby is sane and normal. I don't pretend to know what has happened, but something

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—God knows what—has blotted up her entire mentaltiy. Her brain is like a sponge—squeezed dry."

I stood up then. "I'm going to find Professor Cartwright," I said. "He's tied up with this some way. When I find him I'll be able to answer some questions that I can't now."

I left the hospital room without looking again at Joan's slim, pathetically limp form.

In the hallway I bumped into a stretcher which four short, brown men were wheeling past.

"Cinder in my eye," I muttered, "sorry!"

One of them answered me and I stopped. Something was bothering me. A number of unrelated, unimportant occurrences seemed to be standing out in my mind as if they were about to fall into some definite pattern. I pulled the lobe of my ear and walked on, frowning. Hunches are things I don't ignore.

When I reached the lobby of the hospital, I slumped into a chair and did a little thinking. The one thing that I wanted to find out was if there was any connection between the disappearance of Professor Cartwright and Professor Engles. And then I wanted to know what had happened to Joan.

I noticed an Oriental bus boy crossing the lobby carrying a tray of dishes and something about him bothered me. I lighted a cigarette impatiently. And then one of the pieces of the jig-saw dropped suddenly into place.

The four men wheeling the stretcher I had bumped into were all dark, swarthy—the bus boy had reminded me of them. What the hell were Chinese or Asiatic attendants doing wheeling a stretcher about this hospital?

I didn't wait to answer that question. I shot out of my chair and raced for the steps, a dozen vague and nameless fears spurring me. I took the steps two at a time as fast as I could run. But half way between the second and third floor I heard a shrill, desperate scream and I knew I was too late.

A frantic nurse collided with me as I turned the corner from the stairs to the corridor and for a matter of ten seconds I had my hands full of hysterical femininity.

"Snap out of it," I shouted. "What happened?"

"They took her," she screamed, "took her with them. I couldn't stop them."

I dropped her and pounded down the corridor to Joan's room. One glance told me the story. A window open leading to the fire escape; the old doctor sprawled on the floor; a crimson blot staining the silver of his hair.

And Joan's bed rumpled and empty!

I ACTED fast to keep myself from thinking. I got to the window just in time to see a black limousine pulling away from the front of the hospital.

I made it back downstairs in half the time it took me to get up. There might be a chance of trailing that car if I just got a break. I was racing to the revolving door when the cops grabbed me from behind.

They weren't any too gentle about it. A big hand hooked into my shoulder and I was spun half way around into the arms of another huge, blue-coated figure.

"What's your hurry?" the big cop snapped. "We got a call over here and I guess you're our man all right. You smart guys are all alike. In such a hurry to fade that you run right into our arms."

I whipped out my press card and shoved it at him.

"Look at that," I snapped, "and get your meat hooks off me. If you blundering morons would learn to use your brains instead of your mitts you'd get better results."

"Well, gee, I thought—"

"With what?" I asked icily. Then I turned and raced through the revolving door to the street. But I was too late again. The street was completely deserted.

I cursed bitterly and fluently then and I didn't stop until I was out of breath. Joan gone—her father missing—nothing made any sense.

I was standing next to the intersection of an alley and a dim street lamp illuminated the street and part of the alley with a murky radiance. The thing was getting too much for me. There was no rhyme or reason to anything that had happened. Nothing I could sink my teeth into, to start swinging at. I turned wearily and started for the hospital. I hadn't taken ten steps before I heard the slight noise behind me.

I turned and my eyes blinked in the light and then opened wide as they focused on the small familiar figure that was facing me.

In the light of the street lamp I could see spectacles gleaming and I could see a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Homburg hat outlined and I knew that the trousers the little man was wearing were gray with a pin stripe and I also knew that beady, bright almond eyes were watching me behind a deceptively vacant smile.

I recognized Mr. Wu, the beaming little Chinese who had visited me earlier in the day.

He stepped closer to me, bowing with his shy deferential gesture.

"I am so very, very sorry," he said, and I noticed again his crisp English, "that you did not think it sufficiently important to return this morning." I could see him smiling. "That was most unfortunate, wasn't it?"

"I don't know," I said, "supposing you just do a little more talking."

"This is a very serious matter, my young friend," he said with his polite, silly smile, "and if you will allow a suggestion from one much older than yourself, it is a matter that you would do better to leave alone."

I MOVED a little closer to him, my right arm ready to swing. At last it looked like I had something definite to work on.

"Go on," I said. "Don't stop."

"Thank you," he said, with another bow, "but I must warn you not to give way to the impulsiveness of youth and allow yourself to act rashly and," he lingered only a second on the word, "dangerously."

"Go on," I said.

"My plans have been considerably frustrated," he went on, "and perhaps part of that might be interesting to you. You see I was only a few minutes late at Professor Cartwright's this morning."

I nodded and inched closer to him.

"Then," he continued suavely, "I am late here now. The girl is gone and that is a great disappointment. I had such hopes of finding her here. But she is gone; that I see in your face. Mr. Burke," there was a metallic edge to the smooth voice, "please be so good as to relax."

I looked down and saw that a small thirty-two revolver was pointing at about the middle button of my vest. I relaxed and my respect for Mr. Wu went up a point. I hadn't seen him draw that gun.

"So," he went on blandly, "we come to the important matter. The black book. Will you please be so good as to hand it to me, Mr. Burke?"

"What book?" I asked blankly.

Mr. Wu smiled.

"So droll of you," he said in his liquid tones, "to feign ignorance. Perhaps I can refresh your memory. Look in your outside coat pocket, Mr. Burke. The top of the book is visible to me."

I jammed my hand into my pocket and felt the leather bound book. I pulled it out, remembering it for the first time. It was the book I had picked up in the Professor's laboratory. There was nothing I could do. I handed him the book.

"What's that got to do with everything?" I asked.

Mr. Wu looked distressed. "I am sorry that you do heed my so excellent advise. This matter is very involved and very treacherous and I wish you would not concern yourself with it. It grieves me extremely when my advice is disregarded. Do you understand, Mr. Burke?"

"Yeah," I said drily. "You're mixed up in the disappearance of Joan and Professor Cartwright and probably Professor Engles. I'm going to make it a sort of lifetime hobby to see that you swing for abduction and maybe murder. That's what I understand."

"The younger generation," Mr. Wu's smile beamed broadly, "add garrulousness to brainlessness and call the mixture bravery. Very peculiar, but very common. A last entreaty, Mr. Burke. You are dealing with things of which you have no knowledge. Things which are black and dangerous—for everyone. So I beg of you —before you are *too* deeply involved—stay clear."

Suddenly his eyes flashed over my shoulder and the smile wiped itself from his face.

"Fools," I heard him mutter. "They will never learn."

He flung himself into the shadow of a small shrubbery and I saw twin streaks of orange belch from the tip of his gun. I wheeled and saw a black car sliding to the curb. I started to run but before I could move three feet, I was thrown to the earth violently by an assailant from behind. I struggled furiously until something pounded into the top of my skull.

CHAPTER III

Morea Khan

THE next thing I remembered was pain. Pain that traveled up and down in my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

body in engulfing waves that seemed to smash into my head and roar and fizzle there for hours at a time.

Then I opened my eyes and the effort was almost too much for me. I closed them again and tried not to retch.

"No serious after effects I trust?" the voice sibilant and smooth cut through my befogged senses like a whistling lash. I winced and opened my eyes again.

A thin, grotesque figure stood before me, a cold smile playing over his dark features. He was a toweringly tall man, gaunt to the point of emaciation. His plain sack clothes hung on him as if they were draped on planks. His face was wide and flat but no one would ever notice his face as long as they could see his eyes. They were black and fathomless wells that reflected now, sadistic, humorless mirth.

I stared at him for an instant, and then as the events of the last few hours came surging back into my memory I straightened up in my chair and felt the top of my head gingerly.

"Does it hurt?" the gaunt spectre asked solicitously.

"I wish the guy would try it again," I said, "from the front."

"Sometimes we are forced to take measures that are repugnant to us," the tall figure bowed slightly.

It sounded phony as hell to me. "What is it you want?" I asked bluntly.

"Nothing but a little information, namely, the whereabouts of a certain, small leather-bound black book."

"You missed the boat," I said. "The book is gone."

"I am Morea Khan," the tall figure said with a curious smile. "I know that you had the book, but I don't know where you have hidden it. I am giving you the opportunity to tell me. The cause for which I have labored decades will not be impeded by an obstinate tongue, I assure you. I have already gone to great lengths to secure that book, but I have met with disappointments. I warn you my patience is running short. The girl didn't have it, so you must."

My hands gripped the arms of the chair.

"What was that you said?" I asked thickly.

"The girl didn't have it," Morea Khan repeated sharply. "What—"

He never finished that sentence. I left my chair like I was shot from a catapult, driving straight for that scrawny throat. The man responsible for Joan's condition, for Joan's disappearance was within reach of my hands and that was all I asked.

But I didn't figure with that whop on the head I'd got. It must have taken a lot out of me because my knees buckled, almost throwing me forward on my face. But I caught myself in time and let a long looping right fly at Khan's moon-like face. It landed and the tall, stringy figure toppled, backward, a strangely shrill cry of pain and rage escaping his teeth.

I tried to follow up but something had happened to my arms. They seemed to weigh tons and before I could lift them my legs gave way and I felt myself sprawling on the floor, the pain rushing into my head again. I didn't pass out because I could feel Morea Khan kicking me in the ribs, and then I felt his arms around me dragging me over the floor. The next thing I knew I was sprawled in the chair again, my head ready to explode.

WHEN I opened my eyes I got a slight satisfaction from the dark swollen bruise on Morea Khan's cheek and the thin trickle of blood that ran from his lip.

"That was foolish," he said, dabbing at his lip with a silk handkerchief, "and you will regret it. You might as well know that escape from here is impossible."

"Where is this joint?" I asked.

"About thirty miles from the city. It is ostensibly the home of a wealthy importer. The suspicions of your stupid police are completely lulled. It is as well armed as any fortress. The walls are electrically charged. Sentries patrol the grounds armed with sub machine guns. We could stand off an army here quite comfortably. It is maintained by the cause. No expense has been spared in making the entire estate impregnable."

"Kidnaping's a pretty serious business," I remarked. "You've got several of them to worry about."

"It is not I who worry," Khan returned, "but you."

"You got something there," I said.

"Where is the black book?" Khan asked again and this time his voice sank to almost a whisper.

"Is this a game?" I asked. "You know who got the book. Probably one of the guys working for you."

"You lie," Khan hissed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I didn't like that.

"Now listen, you comic opera emperor," I said. "A little guy with a silly smile took the book away from me. A little guy with striped trousers and a black Homburg."

I hadn't been looking at Khan while I was speaking and when I raised my eyes and looked at him I received a shock. He was sagging against his desk, his saffron skin becoming a mottled shade of green.

The breath was whistling in and out of his lungs as if they were made of wicker.

"You are lying," he said hoarsely. "He can't—you are making this up."

"His name was Wu," I said.

Morea Khan stiffened and then jabbed a buzzer on his desk. He waited as if in a trance until two monkey-like little brown men bounced into the room. Then he turned to them and rattled off a string of words in some foreign tongue. The effect on the two men was startling. They backed away from Morea Khan, their brown skins lightening. Then they looked carefully around them and bowed low and backed from the room.

Morea Khan seemed to have regained his composure. The mirthless, sadistic smile was playing around his lips again.

"There are many things you could tell me," he said, "inasmuch as you know of Mr. Wu. There are many colors in the tapestry I see that do not blend. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated and will not be unrewarded."

"Go to hell," I said.

Morea Khan's fathomless black eyes glowed strangely and an inscrutable, satanic smile twisted his features.

"You will be more obliging in a short while," he said smoothly. "You will talk. Ah yes, you will talk. And when you start you will never stop."

It wasn't the most pleasant thing in the world to listen to.

"What's the gag?" I asked, trying hard to sound as if I didn't care.

"You will see," Morea Khan said politely. "If you will accompany me into the next room I shall show you the little device that will spur you to loquacity."

He started to turn and then he paused, listening. In a second I heard it too. The wild, lonely baying of hounds.

Khan was frowning.

"My little pets," he said, "are uneasy."

He strode to the wall and lifted a phone off a hook.

"Inspect the grounds," he ordered. "Check everything . . . listen and you will know why." He hung up the phone a minute later and when he faced me again I could see that he was smiling slightly. "It is nothing," he said, "so don't allow your hopes to rise. Merely a passing tourist car that attracted the attention of the hounds."

A minute passed and I said nothing. A tourist car could go a long way in a couple of minutes. But the hounds were still baying. Khan did not notice but I kept listening and hoping as the weird, incredibly eerie baying of the hounds moaned through the air.

CHAPTER IV

The Mind-Draining Machine

MOREA KHAN stepped to the door, still holding his automatic trained on the middle of my skull. He shouted something over his shoulder, and footsteps shuffled down the dark hallway. Then two of his Eurasian-men-friday were beside him. Khan said something else to them, his grin exposing that row of gold teeth, and they stepped toward me.

The dark little Asiatics grabbed my arms before I could make a move. Not that I might have wanted to, however, for my head was splitting from that blow I'd received hours before. I went along docilely enough as the procession—with Khan's tall, gaunt frame leading—wound down a series of darkened stairways and through several more halls.

I was trying to make my brain function through the haze of pain that blurred my eyes with every step I took. Trying, in some fashion, to put the pieces of this damnable puzzle together. Some parts were fitting, but only the obvious ones. It was obvious, for example, that Joan was here in this vast mansion—somewhere. I could take Khan's word for that, I was grimly certain. But the gaunt Asiatic thug hadn't mentioned Professor Cartwright. However, unless the old man had been dispatched before now, he must also be somewhere around here, Khan's prisoner.

And the mysterious Mr. Wu— There didn't seem to be any manner of fitting him into the puzzle, yet. There was the black book, of course. Mr. Wu must have been in possession of it at this moment. Even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though Morea Khan wasn't particularly pleased about it. I wasn't certain that Khan believed my story about the black book, and as we turned down the last flight of stairs into a sort of dank cellar, I had the definite feeling that Khan suspected I knew what the contents of that book were—even though I didn't have it on my person.

Another thing that was sickeningly evident was that my lean and hungry wolfish chum, Khan, was probably going to do a little plain and fancy probing on me for information about the book.

I didn't know a thing about it. In fact, Khan really must have known more about it at that instant than I did. However, even if I'd known every last syllable, I felt certain that he wasn't going to drag a word out of me.

We had stopped in the darkness of the cellar passage, and were standing before a great iron door. Khan had some keys which he was fumbling with, and in a moment the door swung inward and one of the Asiatics flicked a switch that threw the subterranean chamber into a sudden brilliance. I gasped involuntarily. The place was a large, clean, elaborately equipped laboratory!

I was inside and jammed down into another chair, the little Asiatics standing guard over me, when I heard other steps outside. And then a second procession filed through the door. A procession of three little thugs—looking identical to the Asiatics who stood guard over me—escorting a tall, gray, lean figure in badly wrinkled and slightly bloody tweeds. It took me less than three seconds to recognize that man. For I had seen more than a hundred pictures of him in the last twenty-four hours. It was Professor Engles—the Einstein of electricity!

KHAN must have been watching my face closely, for he grinned again, those gold teeth gleaming. And drawing his breath in sharply, he said:

"So, Mr. Burke, you recognize our prisoner, eh?"

I couldn't say a word. Even if there had been anything to say, anything worth saying. It was just as though a heavy boot had just kicked the breath out of me. Engles—so this explained his disappearance!

Everything was wheeling around so wildly in my brain that I wasn't able to do anything but stare glassily at Professor Engles. The old man seemed drugged. At any rate, he didn't look right or left, didn't even seem to notice Khan or myself. He just slumped down in the chair they shoved up behind him, staring dully ahead.

And then the little Asiatics were rolling some equipment out from behind a screen in the far corner of the laboratory. A thing that looked at first glance like a cross between a dental chair and the Hot Seat itself. Wired, with a dome-like headpiece over the top of it.

"We don't need the black book to use this properly, as you might know, Mr. Burke," Khan hissed softly. "However, if Professor Engles' mind is ever to be restored, so that we may use it further, the book will be necessary. I'll leave that up to you—for the moment."

It was still Alpha and Omega to me, so there wasn't anything I could say in answer, even though Khan was evidently expecting me to say something. I just sat there, glaring at him, trying to figure it out. Then they were fooling with the machine. They rolled a cart-table up beside it. A table on which there was apparatus closely resembling one of those home-recording instruments they sell with radios these days. It was a sort of gigantic dictagraph, with records that were at least five times the normal size.

The little Asiatics, under Khan's direction, hooked up the cart-table dictagraph with the strange chair. At one point during the hooking-up process, Khan turned to me and gave me that golden grin.

"Professor Cartwright is a clever man, eh, Burke?"

At last the equipment seemed to be arranged to suit Khan, and he gave a clipped order, that resulted in Professor Engles' guards pulling him up from his chair and dragging him over to the wired seat beside the dictagraph. They clamped him into this with remarkable ease, for he made no attempt to struggle. Then they slid the headpiece down over him.

"Perhaps you have never seen Cartwright's very remarkable invention in operation, Mr. Burke," Khan said. "This should be an interesting demonstration, in that case."

More clipped, swift orders in that strange dialect, and the Asiatics jumped around like monkeys on a stick while Khan took his place beside Professor Engles who was now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strapped helplessly in the chair. Khan's clawlike hand touched a lever beside the dictagraph, and a record-wax began revolving swiftly on it. Then his hand slid to another lever.

"We had to drug Professor Engles to keep him quiet. But it should work well, nevertheless," he smirked. And at that, his hand threw down on the second lever.

Instantly the room was filled with a peculiar buzzing, and for a split second the lights in the laboratory seemed to dim. Then, incredibly, Professor Engles was talking!

It wasn't the man's voice that startled and shocked me. It was the tone of it—monotonous, and robot-like, droning! Professor Engles was rambling, almost incoherently, like a child reciting a very lengthy and terribly stupid verse!

THE words he said were jumbled, and yet they weren't, they were like the conglomeration of news broadcasts, conversations with friends, snatches of songs that a man might hum inwardly. It was weird, ghastly, somehow spine-chilling!

And then figures began to tumble from his lips, figures that mingled with the other stuff, formulae, and more mumbo-jumbo of everyday expressions and sentences. And all the while, the big wax record on the cart beside him kept whirring around and around. And then I began to see. The machine was recording all this, everything Engles was uttering!

I must have been sitting there open-mouthed in the astonishment I felt. For Khan, grinning mockingly at me, said over the muttered words of Professor Engles:

"Your acting, if it *is* acting, is very commendable. As you undoubtedly realize, Mr. Burke, the Professor is being drained—syllable by syllable—of every last bit of conscious and subconscious information that has registered on his brain since infancy. The brain, as you undoubtedly realize, has a perfect record of every last fragment of knowledge possessed by its owner. Professor Engles has a very valuable brain, with especially valuable knowledge, for our Cause."

My disbelief must have been still stamped on my face, for Khan continued.

"Every word uttered by the Professor is being impressed on the wax record you see beside him. Then, since the information from him is being drained from this present year *backward*, we will play our record in reverse, once we have our information, and thus have access to every last scrap of knowledge gained by the Professor—in logical succession—since the time of his childhood."

But for the last few words I hadn't been listening closely to Morea Khan. My mind had been filling in the gaps in the puzzle as quickly as his words segmented them. The "Cause"—this was the third time that he had mentioned the word. And since the arrival of Professor Engles it was apparent that the old scientist now sitting in the chair and being drained of his knowledge had especially valuable information which Khan wanted, for the benefit of a mysterious "Cause!"

I looked up and saw Khan's cold eyes regarding me curiously. Obviously, he was still undecided as to how much I really knew about the whole thing. He had deliberately fed me scraps of information in an effort to draw some outburst from me that might show him where I stood.

But I tore my eyes from Khan's mocking gaze, and tried desperately to concentrate, tried to shut out Professor Engles' monotonous muttered recitation. This machine was Cartwright's, of course; that was apparent by now. I'd known, naturally, that Cartwright had been working on something or other for the past two years, but since it had been obviously none of my business, I'd never gotten nosey. But Khan, knowing of my closeness with the Cartwright family, and of my engagement to Joan, hadn't been at all certain of what I knew especially after my having accidentally fallen upon that damnable little black book.

Engles was now perfectly worked into my jigsaw. His work with the National Defense Commission on a new weapon was reason enough for Khan and his "Cause" to bring the old Professor here. They wanted knowledge about that weapon—and with Cartwright's machine were getting it. All of which fitted Joan and her father, Professor Cartwright closer into the jigsaw. With a machine such as Cartwright's, anyone using it to such a devilish advantage could tap the greatest brains in the world and gain access to an utterly incredible fund of knowledge. For any outfit labeling itself as a "Cause," this power would be terribly important!

And suddenly, through all this, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought that had been plucking insistently at my subconscious, hit me with a wallop. Joan—for the first time I realized what had happened to her, why she had been in the complete coma when I found her. It was crystal clear now, sickeningly so. Joan had been drained of knowledge in precisely the same fashion that Professor Engles was at this moment!

And suddenly, I became conscious of the room again, and of Khan grinning like some ghastly devil. The noise that had jerked my mind back to my surroundings had been a sudden, queer, high-pitched whine.

CHAPTER V

I Go Into Action

ENGLES' face had grown deadly, sickeningly white, and his lips were moving at an utterly astonishing rate of speed. So fast that they were a blur of motion. And the whine was coming from his lips!

Khan's gold teeth were exposed in a grin once more.

"I have adjusted the rheostat on this device to a much greater speed. At this rate, Professor Engles is imparting ten years knowledge in less than a minute's actual time. Of course, in replaying the record, we can slow it down to whatever pace we desire. The blurred, whining sound you hear is nothing more than Engles' words blurring into one another as he speaks faster than any man has ever spoken."

I had to say something, although it would have been mad to move. The Asiatics were still standing guard over me. Both had guns and were far enough out of reach to make the prospect of trying to disarm them an impossible one. But I had to say something.

"Damn your stinking hide, Khan!" I shouted.

But the yellow devil only grinned goldenly at me.

"You will take Professor Engles' place in this machine once he is finished, Mr. Burke. I have decided that I can obtain all the information I want from you in that manner."

I had expected something like that, and was about to snarl something in reply when there was a sudden rattling at the iron door that led to the cellar pasage. Khan wheeled, then moved to the great grilled door, throwing a latch and opening it slightly. A voice, high and slightly hysterical, shrilled something in that strange dialect, and Khan answered sharply. He slammed the door, turning to me.

"We are interrupted," he said, trying to keep his voice silken, although I could see uneasiness in his opaque eyes. "You will be taken back to your cell upstairs. I'll take care of you later. Some slight disturbance has occurred outside the grounds of the estate. If, by some chance, it might be anyone seeking you—" he broke off ominously. Then he went on. "We have several thousand sticks of explosives hidden under the grounds and the house on this estate. The explosive is controlled by a central switch. Miss Cartwright, her Father, Professor Engles, here, and yourself, will all be blown to Hell if it appears as though there is the least likelihood of our being discovered. Remember that, Mr. Burke, if you please!"

And then Khan barked something at the two Asiatics who stood guard over me. A moment later, and he had darted out into the cellar passageway—evidently going out to see what the trouble was. I was wondering about it myself, when the two guards jerked me to my feet and began to propel me to the door—obviously on instructions left by Khan. The door closed behind us and we stood in the dank, dark passageway, and the scene in the laboratory was cut off as if by a stage curtain. But back there, I knew, poor Engles was still being drained dry of knowledge by the dictagraph, while Khan's lackeys stood guard over him.

We were moving along, a guard on either side of me, and in the darkness I stumbled once or twice. The second time I stumbled, I must have kicked a loose pebble that rattled hollowly in the cavernous passage. It startled my squat captors, and they peered excitedly ahead. Which gave me my idea. If their nerves were beginning to get sleazy—now was the time to act!

MY cigarette case was still in my pocket, and I wasn't noticed as I reached back for it. It was too dark, and besides both my captors knew that I'd been disarmed. Then the case was in my hand, a silver thing, rather large. Even under the circumstances I hated to think of parting with it. Joan had given it to me two years ago.

I held it behind my back as we marched

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

along through the darkness. The stone walls were damp, and close enough to reach out and touch. Close enough to hit with a cigarette case, even throwing it with a high, backward, backhand flip—which I did at that instant.

The clatter of the case striking the stone sides of the wall was like an unexpected fire gong—and instantly, just as I had hoped, both my captors wheeled as one, peering excitedly back through the darkness!

This gave me my chance. As they wheeled, I turned too, but stepped back six inches, extending both hands wide to grab their smoothshaven skulls. I don't think I ever put as much *uuuuumph* into anything as I did to the yank I gave those two skulls as I brought my arms together. There was a nasty "crack" as their heads collided, and they slumped down at precisely the same time—both out cold!

In something less than a minute, I had taken both their guns, jamming one in my pocket and holding the other ready for trouble. Then I got their keys, and for an instant I looked back at the great iron door behind which Engles was still held captive. But I knew I didn't dare chance barging back in there. There were two more guards with him, and Khan and the others might be coming back at any moment.

I did pause long enough to tear a few shirts apart and bind and gag the two unconscious little yellow men who lay at my feet. Then, sweating icily, I dragged them back into a darkened corner and got on my way. Speed was what counted now. And plenty of it.

It was hit and miss, as I groped my way through the upper sections of the huge house. And there was no telling when I'd run into one of Khan's little grizzly gnomes. Room after room, one by one, I used the keys that I'd taken from my captors, and I finally hit a winner, barging in on Professor Cartwright—tied and gagged, and lying stretched out on the floor of a bedroom!

I had his bonds untied in less than a minute, and he sat up groggily, rubbing his chafed wrists and ankles and fighting for the breath that the gag in his mouth had taken away.

"Give it to me fast, Professor," I told him. "We haven't a lot of time, and this isn't the grand delivery, yet. There's still a swarm of yellowjackets running around this diggings, and we're liable to be greeted by some of 'em at any minute. Where's Joan? Do you know where they're holding her?"

"Jim," he began. He was badly shaken, bewildered. But I had to cut him short.

"There's time for that later," I said urgently. "Come on, try to stand. Here." I pressed the automatic I had in my pocket into his hand. "You'll need this. Now, again, where's Joan?"

Professor Cartwright was a little, sawed-off man with white hair and a perpetually inquisitive glance. He would have looked funny standing there holding a gun and looking grimly bewildered if the circumstances had been any different. But they weren't.

"I'm not certain," Cartwright said, "but I think she's on this floor. I got a glance of her through an open door along the hallway outside when they were bringing me up here!"

"Let's get going then," I barked.

THERE was no one in the hall, as yet, when we stepped quickly out of the room in which they'd been holding Cartwright. With the set of keys I'd stolen, we began moving along all the doors along the hallway. There must have been at least fifteen of them in addition to the one in which I'd found Cartwright. Suddenly Cartwright snapped his fingers.

"I remember, Jim. It's down at the end of this hall, the very last door. Was too dazed to recall it until now. But I'm certain she's in that room!"

He was pointing about twelve doors down the hall, and I was suddenly thankful. This would save us a lot of time. In ten seconds flat we were down to that door. And in that instant later we had thrown it open and stepped inside. I didn't know quite what I'd been expecting to see, so of course I held the gun ready. I think Cartwright was waving his automatic around, too, but I can't recall exactly, for the shock of the sight that met our eyes left me cold all over.

The room was empty!

But Joan had obviously been in the room, and recently. The unmistakable odor of her perfume hit my nostrils immediately. And in addition to that, a broken piece of coral bracelet that belonged to her was lying on the floor. But no Joan—that was the thought that choked my heart in a sudden, awful wrench!

Cartwright started to say something, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'll never know what it was, for in the next split-second a shot slammed out in the hallway and a bullet whined less than a foot from my ear and splattered into the wall behind me!

I dived to the rug, dragging Cartwright down with me, my finger instinctively squeezing hard on the trigger of the gun in my hand. I don't know if I hit anything, but I was aiming in the direction of that shot, and my gun was kicking hard, spitting orange streaks in the right direction. The noise and smoke and confusion was astonishing.

Suddenly the smoke cleared enough for me to catch a quick glimpse of three little Asiatics darting to the shelter of doorways along the hall. And in a moment later the three were blazing forth from their hasty barricades, their shots *panging* too accurately for comfort.

It was during all this that I squirmed my way out of range, old Professor Cartwright inching right along beside me, to a spot where I was able to make a rising leap for the wall switch. My hand caught the button, and we were given the instant advantage of inky blackness to conceal our movements.

There were three more shots, then, followed by a ringing silence. A silence that seemed to last an eternity, and made the flesh creep along the nape of my neck. I could hear Cartwright breathing softly beside me, and I turned my head a little to whisper.

"Wonder what in the hell they're up to?" I hissed.

"Ummmnnnh," the Professor muttered back. "Wish we knew."

"I don't like it. Another three minutes of this and they can round up everyone in the joint to start potting us out of our hole!" I answered.

But I was mistaken, or so I thought, for the shooting broke out again an instant later, and we were kept busy rolling out of the way of splintering plaster. Cartwright was shooting now, and I had a second to marvel at the way he used a gun—carefully, but with efficiency. We were saving our shots, by unspoken agreement. However, we had to return every fourth or fifth bullet to show them we were still on the job. Much more of this and our guns would be empty.

The din was terrific, and it was certain that Khan was in on the fun by now, for he couldn't have missed the noise. I was speculating on this, and wondering how many of the yellow devils had ganged up in the hallway there—when the walls caved in and everything went inky!

They must have used gun butts to do the trick, the lads who had crept stealthily in through the window of our room—while the gunplay was going on!

CHAPTER VI

Welcome, Mr. Wu!

SOMEONE was sloshing water over my face, and it was ice-cold and quite unpleasant. Voices murmured in the background, hazily at first, and then more clearly. A great, white, hot light seemed to be tearing my eyelids apart. And then I regained consciousness.

Morea Khan stood over me, an empty glass in his hand. One glance showed me that we were back in his cellar laboratory, and that Professor Cartwright was also present. The old man was bound and gagged, strapped in a chair directly opposite me. I was pigtied in the same fashion. But I wasn't gagged. There were seven of Khan's Asiatic flunkies standing around the dictagraph machine.

The flunkies moved slightly, giving me my first clear view of the machine. Professor Engles was still strapped in the wired chair beside it. He was dead. Morea Khan, the baldheaded yellow devil, must have seen the horror that sprang to my eyes at the sight of Engles' body.

"Unfortunate, Mr. Burke, that I had to leave my boys in charge of the machine. The disturbance at the gates to the estate was but a trifling one, but by the time I returned to the laboratory, my able assistants had permitted Engles to die. However, not before the record was made. A pity." But even as Khan's words hissed to a polite ending, I could see that his cockiness was vastly shaken. The short, but healthy fight which Cartwright and I had made of it must have scared hell out of him.

"What's the pitch?" I snarled. "Why didn't you get rid of us when you had the chance upstairs?"

"There is still a certain question, the answer to which I think you know," Khan said ominously. "Professor Cartwright, over there, refused to divulge the knowl-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge. Unfortunately, our methods of persuading him to do so resulted in his losing consciousness for the moment."

I glanced quickly to the old Professor. I hadn't noticed it until now, but he was out—definitely. One look at the soles of his naked feet was enough to make me want to vomit. The unconsciousness which had come to ease the pain had been a blessing for him. Then Khan must have read my thought about the dictagraph machine.

"Perhaps you wonder why I did not put Cartwright in his own device, and thus obtain the information?" he asked silkily. "The answer is simple. The information we want is contained in the black book, the one I, er, mentioned to you before. If we'd risk Cartwright's life in the machine, and fail to get the information, we would never be certain of obtaining it."

"And what do you want from the book?"

Khan smiled evily at my question. "It is the revitalizing process by which the effects of the machine are repaired, by which the brain information grooves are restored in the individual who has been sapped of his knowledge. Through it, we will be able to use our information guinea pigs again and again. Very important to the scheme in which the Cause intends to use our, er, borrowed scientific knowledge. It was a shame, for example, that Engles had to die. We could have forced him to work out further formulae for us."

"So?" I tried to dig up every last ounce of scorn for the word.

"You can tell us where the book is," Khan's voice contained an ominous hint of what he intended to do if I *wouldn't* talk.

"I told you before," I shouted, "I was relieved of the damned thing by—"

I didn't finish that sentence, for at that moment the iron door swung open, and someone stepped into the laboratory. That someone's voice said politely:

"By Mr. Wu?"

THE entire room seemed to hang suspended in a shocked silence, while all eyes gazed askance at the figure standing in the doorway. It was as perfectly a timed entrance as a Barrymore might have demanded. But this wasn't Barrymore—it was Mr. Wu!

He was smiling, that same silly little smile. He still wore his frock coat and striped trousers, but his homburg hat was missing. His almond eyes peered pleasantly out from behind his spectacles, and his gloved right hand held a gun, quite unwaveringly, on the entire room.

Cartwright and I were bound, and Engles was dead. Consequently Khan nor any of his henchmen were displaying fighting ware. You could see Mr. Wu's sharp little eyes noting all this with satisfaction.

"You all have weapons concealed on your person. Do not attempt to reach for them," Mr. Wu declared, and his voice was like a host's asking guests to stay for tea. "Please move more closely together," he added, waving that gun ever so slightly. Khan's thugs shuffled closer, and Mr. Wu, with never a trace of fear, moved over to them. Calmly, one-by-one, he took their weapons. He deposited all these in a neat little pile at his feet.

"That is better," he said. "Much better. Now please untie the bonds of Mr. Burke."

The Asiatics behaved as though they were hypnotized, and even Khan, glaring wildly at Mr. Wu, hadn't uttered a word yet. Then one of the lackeys was untying me. Moments later I was stretching the kinks out of my muscles, while Mr. Wu said:

"You will untie Professor Cartwright please, Mr. Burke. Dash water in his face to bring him around."

It was while I was loosening Cartwright's bonds that Khan suddenly broke loose in a violent torrent of strange dialect.

Mr. Wu had moved back to lean against the laboratory wall, next to what looked like a gigantic fuse box. He was still smiling foolishly, but the corners of his mouth seemed drawn and extremely tired. He barked a single sharp sentence at Kahn, also in a strange dialect that wasn't Chinese, gesturing sharply with his gun.

Kahn shut up instantly.

"He told me that I was being exceedingly foolish, Mr. Burke." Wu said conversationally. "He remarked that his other henchmen would close in on me, once the alarm were given. But of course, I had adjusted the matter of the others before entering the laboratory. Not being young—as I observed to you once before, Mr. Burke—it is not my habit to be foolish."

But I was frantically splashing water over Professor Cartwright, and at last he came out of his fog, moaning slightly as the pain in him wakened also. Then, blinking, Cartwright saw the entire panorama, his jaw falling open in astonishment, the sight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seeming to drive the thought of pain from his mind.

"What does this add up to, Mr. Wu?" I demanded. "Why are you freeing us, or are you? Where is the girl?"

"I am freeing you, but not out of any emotional instability. I am freeing you because I have found that many things are necessary in this last twenty-four hour period. You and Professor Cartwright will be permitted to leave, without the machine, the dictagraph. I will remain to clean up a most untidy affair—to, as you occidentals might say it, settle a score, with Mr. Khan and his friends."

I was almost screaming my question. "But damn you, Wu, what about Joan? What about the girl? You seem to know everything, so where is she?"

MR. WU smiled that silly smile that was growing more weary with every passing minute.

"The girl is safe. She is waiting in a car, outside. Her mind will have to be restored. However, her father, with the aid of his very valuable black book. . . ." Mr. Wu paused to extract the black leather notebook from his pocket and toss it into my startled grasp, . . . "will be able to successfully restore her mind, once you have all gotten to safety."

I might have only imagined it, but I thought I saw the gun in Mr. Wu's hand waver ever so slightly. But his quiet, precise voice went on.

"Briefly Mr. Burke, the story is this. Khan's government is planning, through a union with certain European powers, to crush my own homeland. Khan is an agent for this government, and I serve my own country. It was essential to my government that Khan's seizure of the deadly dictagraph machine was not successful. I was delegated to prevent that seizure.

"Up until this point, my efforts have been inexcusably clumsy, very poorly timed. Khan almost succeeded, thanks to my dull wit. But at the moment, I hold all the . . . ah . . . aces. I intend to keep them. Khan shall not escape these grounds, neither will his henchmen."

For a second I started to say something, then Mr. Wu went on.

"Your lives are not essential to our plans, Mr. Burke, and so I am giving you time to leave. It was I who removed the girl from her room at the moment that Khan held you captive down here. As I said, she is safely awaiting you in an automobile by the side gate. One of my assistants is driving. I must have your pledge that you do not try to hold him, once he has taken you all back to the city."

"You've got it," I said quickly. "But why don't you come—"

Mr. Wu cut me off, politely.

"You do not understand the code of my race, Mr. Burke. I almost bungled my mission in stopping Mr. Khan. I have determined not to bungle again. According to code, there is but one thing I can do—escort Khan and his devils to the gates of Hell."

Sweat stood out in tiny drops on Mr. Wu's brow, and he seemed to be needing all the support he could get from the wall. His hand went up to touch the switch beside him.

"This estate," he said, "is mined with dynamite. One touch of this lever, and all is destroyed—the machine, Mr. Khan, his henchmen, and myself. Someone must remain to touch this switch. I will do so."

And as I looked at Mr. Wu's gloved hand on the switch, I saw for the first time that a thick stream of red trickled down his sleeve, and that there was another blotch of crimson just above his heart. He hadn't silenced Khan's outside forces without paying the price. He saw my glance and smiled.

"A bad cut," he explained apologetically. "I was clumsy. Now please leave. I shall give you five minutes to get to the car, and another five minutes to get safely away from the grounds. That will give me ten minutes in which I can have an interesting discussion about racial philosophies with Mr. Khan. And then—" Mr. Wu broke off with his silly smile, a smile that was suddenly very unfunny. He bowed politely, never letting his gun waver from Khan and his men for an instant.

"Please," Mr. Wu repeated courteously. "You have ten minutes."

WE left, of course, and precisely ten minutes after that, as we were speeding along the highway in a car driven by a slant-eyed young chap, the entire countryside was rocked for a radius of five miles. The explosion was tremendous, and great orange streaks shot skyward.

There was a pretty bad moment in which I had a vision of a courtly, frock-coated,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

smiling little man with a crimson stain above his heart and an inquisitive gleam in his almond eyes—the imperturbable, painfully correct Mr. Wu.

And then I pushed this picture out of my mind, and looked down at the girl in my arms. Joan was sleeping as peacefully as a baby. But I knew that in less than two hours she would be restored to normal, and that those eyes would open, and I would be looking again at the mentally grown up girl I loved.

« « SCIENTIFIC ODDITIES » »

TINY BUT OH-SO-TENACIOUS!

ALTHOUGH the science and ingenuity of man has been turned to experiments in magnetics for many years, the scientists in the General Electric laboratories just recently developed what is considered to be the most powerful permanent magnet of its size in existence. This new magnet is a tiny piece of alnico, no larger than the thumbnail of an average person. Its weight is less than three quarters of an ounce, and it is capable of holding and lifting as much as two hundred pounds, which roughly amounts to around four thousand four hundred and fifty times its own weight!

ANTI-NICOTINE LEAGUE PLEASE NOTE

In spite of the numerous harmful effects that have been pointed out as the result of smoking cigars, cigarettes, pipes, or what have you, a recent laboratory test made by a bacteriologist has proved that there are some counterbalancing effects of smoking. It was proven, for example, that the consuming of one cigar (smoking, we mean, not eating), two cigarettes, or one pipeful of tobacco, results in the killing of at least one third of the live bacteria present in the mouth of the average person. This includes, of course, harmful as well as helpful bacteria. And since there is more of the former than the latter, an inveterate smoker should be able to build up a good case in his favor, providing he starts with this as a premise.

SOUNDING OFF

Common misconceptions to the contrary, the velocities of sound waves are not, and never have been, dependent on the pitch or loudness of the waves. As a matter of scientific fact, sound is only dependent on the elasticity and density of its medium for its velocity. For an example, sound waves are able to travel at the rate of only 866 feet a second through carbonic acid gas, while traveling at the rate of 1,092 feet a second through still air, 4,730 feet through water, more than 10,000 feet a second through pine wood, and almost 16,000 feet a second through iron substance.

DO ANIMALS TALK?

Many years have been spent in scientific study of possible communication ability in the animal kingdom. To date, the net result of these studies has been the gradual realization that not only do animals have means of communicating with each other, but that each group in the animal kingdom *actually has its own language!* In a test made by a scientist recently with monkeys, simian chatterings were made into recordings with the intention of playing the records back to monkeys for their reactions.

It happened that one of these recordings was made on a very stormy day. The scientists recorded the chatter of one monkey to a second—said conversation obviously being about the bad weather and rumbling thunder outside.

Then, using another monkey some days later, this "about the weather" chattering was played along with other recordings which—tho' made of monkey talk—didn't concern the weather. The lone caged monkey listened apathetically to the latter chatterings, much to the disappointment of the scientist. But when the "weather conversation" was played, the lone monkey pricked up his ears and rushed to the front of his cage, looking out and up at the sky quizzically. Then, since the weather that day was bright and cheerful, the monkey shook its head bewilderedly, and with what might have been a shrug of its shoulders retired to the back of its cage again!

AND SPEAKING OF MONKEYS

Recently a scientific argument developed over the comparative strength of chimpanzees as against the strength of collegiate athletes. (No, a disgruntled prof didn't start it as a protest against dull footballers in his classrooms). In laboratory experimentation, it was proved that a chimp weighing one hundred and thirty-five pounds, could exert a pulling force equalling one thousand, two hundred and sixty pounds. This measurement was obtained through the use of a dynamometer rope attached to a recording device. The best college athletes under identical conditions, were only able to exert a pull somewhat less than *one-half* the strength of the comparatively diminutive chimpanzee!

This chimp, it might be noted, was a lady chimp. Her mate, on another experiment, exerted a *one-handed* pull of eight hundred and forty-seven pounds! Weight lifters please move sheepishly to your corners. . . .

TAKE A DEEP BREATH!

You might not believe it, but by far the loudest respiratory movements even encountered are those of whales. Whalers who have harpooned these huge creatures of the deep have seen them remain under water for as long as two hours during the ensuing chase. And at the end of this period, when the whales were finally forced to come up for air, they have expelled their long-held breath with a "whoosh" that could be heard for more than a mile!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

RATES AND TERMS: Science Fiction Adventure Group consists of 4 books . . Amazing, Fantastic, Thrilling Science Fiction and Science Fiction Adventure Classics. Space can only be bought on GROUP BASIS at the rate of $1.00 per word . . (including name and address). Minimum order of $10.00 (10 words). Payment must accompany copy except when ads are placed by accredited Advertising agency. Frequency discount: 5% for 6 months, 10% for 12 months paid in advance.

GENERAL INFORMATION: First word in all ads set in bold caps at no extra charge. Additional words may be set in bold caps at 5¢ extra per word. All copy subject to publisher's approval. Closing Date: 1st of the 3rd preceding month (for example, April issue closes January 1st). Send order and remittance to: Print Advertising Rep., Inc., 16 West 46th St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

BOOKS

COMPLETE illustrated catalog of all "IN PRINT" SF and Fantasy paperbacks and hardcover books. Over 1,000 titles. No obligation. Write to: ATC SF Books, Suite 1500-A1, 2 Penn Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10001.

THOUGHT EDUCATION, MIND SATELLITE METHOD ATLAS, $4.00. SENSITRON SYSTEM, BOX 1155, St. Augustine, Florida 32084 (INTERNATIONAL).

BOOK Readers! Save! Send title(s) wanted: S & S Books, A-3, 199 North Hamline, St. Paul, Minn. 55104.

OLD RARE BOOKS

OLD RARE REPRINTED BOOKS ON ASTROLOGY, HERBS, NUMEROLOGY, PALMISTRY, OCCULTISM, CATALOG $0.50. MARSHALL, P. O. BOX 7169P, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21218.

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

LIBERTARIAN journal featuring essays, reviews, and commentary from anti-statist viewpoint. Subscription $3.00/year, sample 10¢ The Match! Box 3488, Tucson, Arizona 85722.

LOGIC NEWSLETTER, LOGIC DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTIONS. SAMPLE COPY $1.00. LOGIC NEWSLETTER, POB 252, WALDWICK, N.J. 07463.

THE ALIEN CRITIC—An unconventional S-F Journal by three-time Hugo Winner. Praised by top s-f authors. $1. each. POB 11408, Portland, OR 97211.

NAME the book - we'll find it for you! Out of print book specialists. All subjects. (Title alone is sufficient). Write—no obligation. Books-On-File, Dept. AMF, Union City, N.J. 07087.

FRANKENSTEIN Interview. Monster Tells "True" Story. 20P. Booklet. $1.50. Norris, Postbox 44377-L, Indianapolis, 46244.

100 page catalog Arkham Fantasy Burroughs. Mirage Press Science Fiction pulp, paperbacks, comics. Send 75¢ Passaic Book Center, 594 Main Avenue, Passaic, N.J. 07055.

MAGAZINES

"STRANGER in Strange Land" - Grok? "Green Egg" - $5/8 issues - Church of All Worlds, POB 2953-SF, St. Louis, Mo. 63130.

PERSONALS

LONELY? UNLUCKY? TROUBLED? QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND HAPPINESS COURSE $2.00. ORACLE, BOX 324, ONTARIO, CALIF. 91761.

HANDWRITING Analysis. Specializing in problem areas. Sample on unlined paper, age, sex, $10.00. Jen-N, Box 463, Long Beach, Ca. 90801.

SPECIAL POSTER SALE-½ Price (reduced from $2 to $1). **12 full color posters** reproduced from original covers AMAZING & FANTASTIC from early 30's, 40's, & 50's, $1 each plus 50¢ post. Ultimate Pub. Co. Box 7, Flushing, N.Y. 11364.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

COLLEGE SELECTION MADE EASY. Computer matches your needs, qualifications with entrance criteria of accredited colleges. Free information. NCAS-AF, Box 91453, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.

EARN college degrees at home. Many subjects. FLORIDA STATE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, 'Post Office Box 1674, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33302.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

MAIL ORDER, Importing Business, Fantastic! Directory $2.00. HETTICK, Box 1495, Bismark, N.D.

MAKE $1.00 PER SALE selling engraved metal Social Security plates. FREE SALES KIT. Engravaplates, Box 10460-312, Jacksonville, Florida 32207.

INSTRUCTION

METAPHYSICAL SCIENCE HOME STUDY—MEDITATION, HEALING, FREE CATALOG—WRITE: LIGHTHOUSE, P.O. BOX 4677, TAMPA, FLA. 33607.

MISCELLANEOUS

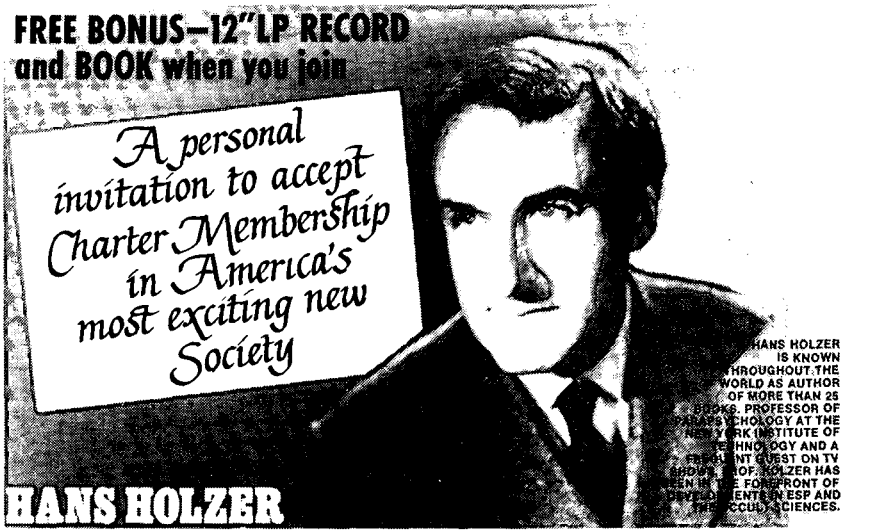
"FREE metaphysical psychic catalogue. Tony Products, Box 783S, Costa Mesa, Calif. 92627."

DISTRIBUTE CENTURY NATURAL VITAMINS. Complete line - fast moving. Write for wholesale prices. Century Natural Products, 126 NW 1st Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. 33301.

ELECTRIC SHAVERS $8.75 for great, daily shaves. ELECTRIC MASSAGERS soothing, relaxing $8.25. Finest quality Swiss imports. New York residents, add 7% tax. F & J SCHUMAN ASSOCIATES. Box 831, Dept. S, Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE BONUS—12" LP RECORD and BOOK when you join



HANS HOLZER IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS AUTHOR OF MORE THAN 25 BOOKS, PROFESSOR OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY AT THE NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND A FREQUENT GUEST ON TV AND RADIO. HOLZER HAS BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN ESP AND THE OCCULT SCIENCES.

INVITES YOU TO DISCOVER THE AMERICAN SOCIETY for the OCCULT SCIENCES

The American Society for the Occult Sciences has been founded to bring you news, special events and benefits, and research information that can be gotten from no other single source . . .

As a member, *you will be invited to special events, seminars, demonstrations—many of which will be personally supervised by* **HANS HOLZER.**

As a member, you will receive **THE PSYCHIC WORLD,** the Society's monthly bulletin, written to keep you posted on latest scientific explorations, to help you learn how to develop your own "psi" abilities, to let you share the ESP experiences of your fellow society members.

As a member, *you will be invited to special travel events—including a "Ghost Hunt" within the New England area . . . an overseas study of English poltergeists . . . continental hauntings.*

As a member, you will be entitled to the consultation services of a specially screened and tested group of psychic "contacts"—astrologers, mediums, gifted sensitives and "seers", and others who have had their abilities tested and verified by the Society.

As a member, *you will be entitled to purchase special books—including many best sellers at substantial discounts. (At least 25% off list price . . . and often as much as 80% off!) You will also be entitled to purchase special reports, monographs and private papers written for members only.*

As a member, you will be offered many products tested by the society—calculated to develop and expand your psychic abilities.

As a member, *you will be given the opportunity to take part in special social events—seminars, psychic development sessions, seances, demonstrations—to be conducted in key cities throughout the nation.*

YOU GET ALL THIS WHEN YOU JOIN

- *BOOKS AT SPECIAL DISCOUNTS*
- *SPECIAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER*
- *EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS FOR MEMBERS ONLY*
- *MEMBERSHIP CARD AND CERTIFICATE SUITABLE FOR FRAMING*
- *CONTACTS WITH SPECIALLY SELECTED PSYCHICS —TESTED BY THE SOCIETY.*

NO OTHER SOCIETY offers so many benefits, such a wide and varied program of activities, publications and events. If you act today, you may get a Charter Membership of 14 months for only $10.00. (The price will probably be much higher after the first of next year.) In addition, you will be entitled to a special bonus gift—for new members only.

SPECIAL BONUS

Join right now and receive FREE a $6.98 LP record: "HANS HOLZER TELLS HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR EXTRA SENSORY PERCEPTION" (On the reverse side: "WHAT IS WITCHCRAFT".) PLUS "The Edgar Cayce Reader" a best selling book.

Mail the coupon right now. After 35 days, if you are not totally delighted with the benefits of membership, just let us know. And every penny you have paid will be refunded.

S-UF7

American Society for the Occult Sciences
227 East 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

Yes! Please enroll me as a Charter member of **The American Society for the Occult Sciences.** Enclosed is payment of $10.00. Rush my introductory package including Newsletter, offerings of books, special events—and much more. I understand that I may get a full refund if I am not totally satisfied with all the benefits of Society membership—at any time within the first 35 days after I have joined.

Act now and get FREE Bonus

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution • **417 S. Dearborn Street, Dept. 91-023 Chicago, Illinois 60605**

Please rush me, without cost or obligation, FREE booklet and full information on the field I have checked below:

ACCOUNTING
☐ Complete Accounting
☐ Income Tax
☐ CPA Training
☐ Bookkeeping

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
☐ Management Training

REAL ESTATE
☐ Complete Real Estate
☐ Real Estate Brokerage

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION
☐ *Complete Training*

AUTOMOTIVE MECHANICS
☐ Basic Training

STENOTYPE
☐ Machine Shorthand

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING
☐ Basic Training

DRAFTING
☐ Complete Training

DIESEL MECHANICS
☐ Basic Training

AIR CONDITIONING & REFRIGERATION
☐ Basic Training

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
☐ French ☐ Spanish

DENTAL OFFICE ASSISTANT
☐ Complete Training

ART TRAINING
☐ *Complete Training*

SECRETARIAL
☐ Complete Training

INTERIOR DECORATING
☐ Complete Training

LAW COURSES
☐ Bachelor of Laws Degree
☐ Business Law
☐ Claim Adjusting Law
☐ Law for Police Officers

No state accepts any law home study course, including LaSalle's, as sufficient education to qualify for admission to practice law.

MOTEL/HOTEL MANAGEMENT
☐ Motel Management
☐ Hotel Management

RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT
☐ *Management Training*

WRITING
☐ Non-Fiction ☐ Fiction

MUSIC INSTRUCTION
☐ Piano ☐ Guitar ☐ Other

HIGH SCHOOL
☐ High School Diploma

Mr.
Mrs. ..... Age....
Miss *(Circle title and please print)*

Address ..... Apt. No.....

City & State ..... Zip .....

01D 10

If you had mailed this coupon a year ago, perhaps your salary would be up too!

WHY NOT MAIL IT TODAY?

Look at these pleased reports from LaSalle students. Many success stories of this kind come to us every year – from people who began their career planning by mailing the LaSalle coupon for information.

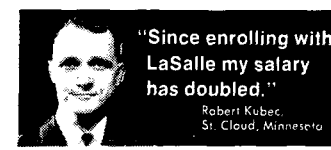
Yes, many graduates attribute their increases in income largely to their LaSalle spare-time training.

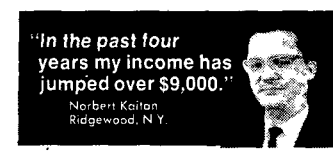
LaSalle students have one ambition in common – to get out of the ranks of the untrained and earn more money and respect in a better job. Isn't that your goal too?

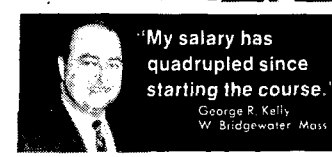
Without interfering with your present work – and by devoting only a little of your spare time – you too can prepare for advancement in the field of your choice through LaSalle home study. The cost is low.

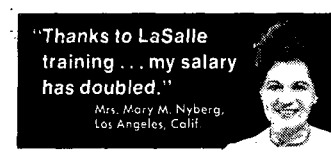
LaSalle has been a leader in home education for more than sixty years, enrolling over 2,000,000 ambitious men and women in its many courses. You study under the supervision of LaSalle's experienced faculty. Upon satisfactory completion of your study, you will receive the LaSalle diploma – a respected credential.

Check the subject you are interested in – then send the coupon above for FREE booklet. No obligation.









© 1971 LaSalle Extension University

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A Correspondence Institution • **417 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60605**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED